

Arab bank manager kidnapped over cheque

SANAA (AFP) — Arab Bank employees in Yemen have threatened to go on strike to protest the kidnapping of one of their managers, newspapers reported Tuesday. The employees, in a press statement, said "outlaws" abducted Ali Mohammad Odeini, deputy manager of the Sanaa branch, on June 2 and called for the authorities to seek out and arrest the kidnappers. A strike will be declared in branches around the country unless Mr. Odeini is released immediately, said local employees of the Amman-based bank. A source at the bank told AFP that a post-dated cheque for \$400,000 involving two "influential businessmen" who are Arab Bank clients was at the centre of the kidnapping. Mr. Odeini refused to honour the cheque ahead of the date, sparking accusations that he was working for the businessman who issued it, the source said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Turkey to set up 'security zone' in northern Iraq

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (AFP) — Turkey plans to set up a "security zone" in northern Iraq where it has been hunting down Kurdish separatist rebels in a nearly month-old operation, a military source said Tuesday. "The army will not pull out before creating a security zone in the north of Iraq to prevent the return of terrorists in the region, from which they will have been dislodged," this source in southeastern Turkey told AFP on condition of anonymity. The term "terrorists" referred to fighters of the Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK), which has been fighting for more than a decade to create a Kurdish homeland in Turkey and uses northern Iraq as a staging post for attacks inside Turkey. The source said the army would set up the buffer zone with an allied Iraqi Kurdish faction, the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by Massud Barzani.

Volume 22 Number 6554

AMMAN WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 1997, SAFAR 6, 1418

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

King, Queen off to Europe to further economic relations with four nations

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor Tuesday arrived in the Hague at the first leg of a four-nation European tour, which will take them to the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

King Hussein and Queen Noor were received by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and senior Dutch officials, in addition to Foreign Minister Faysal Tarawneh and Jordan's ambassador to the Netherlands Umayya Touqan.

King Hussein will meet with Queen Beatrix, French President Jacques Chirac, French and Dutch premiers, as well as the Dutch parliament members.

The King will discuss with senior officials in these countries scopes of bilateral cooperation in the economic and trade fields, as well as the Middle East peace process. King Hussein will also discuss provisions of the Jordanian-European partnership agreement, and will brief the senior European officials on Jordan's plans and incentives to encourage investment in the country.

While in Geneva, King

Hussein will deliver the keynote address at the opening of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference. The King will also address the Joint Jordanian-French Businessmen Council's meeting, which will be attended by a large number of Jordanian and French businessmen to discuss opportunities of investment in Jordan.

King Hussein and Queen Noor were seen off by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath, Royal family members, speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, the King's advisors and senior civil and military officials.

Crown Prince Hassan was sworn in as Regent during the King's absence.

The King is accompanied by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, Planning Minister Rima Khalaf and Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hami Al Mulki.

The King's European tour aims to rally support for resuming Arab Israeli negotiations and foster economic

ties with Europe, according to Jordan Television (JTV).

Before his departure, King Hussein exchanged views over the phone with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on the latest developments of the Middle East peace process, and was briefed by President Mubarak on Egypt's efforts to push the peace process forward on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

In another telephone call, the King reviewed with Syrian President Hafez Assad the latest developments in the Arab region and the Middle East, focusing on the need to counter challenges facing the Arab Nation.

The two leaders stressed the importance of dialogue in conflict resolution and defusing regional crises. The two leaders expressed their keen interest in maintaining continuous consultation on issues of mutual concern as well as common Arab issues.

King Hussein and President Assad reaffirmed their support for the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of others, and expressed interest in maintaining the unity and sovereignty of the region's countries.

King says satisfied with government's plan to amend law to help retired soldiers

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday sent a message to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on the anniversary of the Great Arab Revolt and Army Day expressing his pride in the heroic performance and the sacrifices offered by the Jordanian Armed Forces for the Arab Nation.

"As we celebrate this anniversary we recall the Great Arab Revolt from which the Armed Forces emanated and which continue to play the role of a shield protecting the nation," said the King in his message.

"This anniversary is dear to our hearts and is a moment to express our pride in the sacrifices of

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Crown Prince calls upon donors to continue supporting UNRWA

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Tuesday urged donor nations to shoulder their responsibilities towards Palestinian refugees who have paid dearly while waiting for the world community which witnessed their uprooting to accord them proper treatment.

Addressing the annual donors meeting for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Prince Hassan said Jordan has always worked towards meeting the humanitarian needs of refugees in order to keep their political aspirations alive until final solution based on meeting the refugees rights to return and/or compensation is achieved.

Prince Hassan said Jordan has already contributed, and still contributes a major part of its annual budget to support programmes of Palestinian refugees in ten camp towns in Jordan. He added that the \$300 million that Jordan spends on Palestinian refugees includes the rent of camp sites, the cost of education of refugee student at government schools, improvements in camp facilities and the provision of medical care in government schools. "Jordan has done its utmost in creating a stable environment for Palesti-

ans by offering them the same civil liberties and political freedoms that all Jordanians enjoy, and they have responded in kind by working alongside Jordanians to build the country from the ground up. But to expect us to shoulder a disproportionate share of historic burden that continues to await a just and political solution is unfair and quite frankly, completely unrealistic," Prince Hassan told the meeting which was also attended by participants in the inaugural programme of the United Nations University's International Leadership Academy.

Prince Hassan pointed to the Social Productivity Programme which Jordan adopted this year to provide a strategy for the diminution of poverty at a national scale. This programme, which includes a multi-faceted programme aimed at helping the indigent and a project proposal to develop the education and health sectors in Jordan, was designed to benefit all citizens without discrimination throughout the Kingdom including refugees, the Prince said.

"By enlarging the social safety net to include the poor and dispossessed through financial assistance, training schemes and enhanced job opportunities, we hope to create practical ways to enable a large sector of our population to rise to the opportunity and



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan addresses the annual donors meeting for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) held in Amman on Tuesday (Petra photo)

make something of themselves," Prince Hassan added.

An envisaged Community Development Fund will further accelerate the self-help

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Crown Prince criticises selective application of human rights criteria in international relations

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Tuesday urged a comprehensive approach to human rights issues that will ensure the fulfillment of people's cultural, social, economic, and religious rights.

In a meeting with students at the United Nations University's International Leadership Academy, Prince Hassan criticised the selective application of human rights criteria in international relations.

If it is not politically correct to talk about the suffering of Iraqi children while criticism of human rights related issues in some countries of the region is highlighted, Prince Hassan said he cannot accept that humanitarian concerns are

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Rasheed starts probe into party compliance with law

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government is in the process of studying the compliance of political parties with the 1992 law governing them and those found in violation will be brought to justice in accordance with its articles, Minister of Interior Naeem Rasheed said yesterday.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Rasheed said that his ministry was also determined to ensure strict compliance with the law by professional associations, which, he said, have increasingly been assuming the role of political parties in their operations.

"The professional associ-

ations have not only taken over the role of the political parties and overlooked their basic mission of serving their members' professional interests," the minister said, "they have gone beyond that to infringe on the powers of the government, and this is totally unacceptable," the minister added. "The associations must remember that, according to the constitution (article 23), only labour unions are allowed to form and operate in Jordan. Unlike Syria and Egypt, whose constitutions allow for the formation of such associations, our constitution does not explicitly permit their existence."

"In either the case of the political parties or the asso-

ciations, the law must be observed," Mr. Rasheed said, "democracy is not a free-for-all system, and based on this, we are working to ensure that there is full compliance with the constitution and the laws."

The minister cited the history of political organisation in the Kingdom, saying that ever since 1971, when the National Union party was launched, His Majesty King Hussein has sought to introduce organised political work. "But it was not until after the parliamentary elections of 1989 and specifically the passage of the 1992 law, that we were able to restore political pluralism," he said. "Now is the time to ensure that those



political parties we have licensed are doing their job and not leading us again to political chaos as the case

(Continued on page 7)

U.S. says U.N. action against Israel wrong on 'procedural grounds'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States voted on "procedural grounds" against a U.N. resolution calling on Israel to pay damages for shelling a U.N. compound in southern Lebanon, the State Department said Monday.

A total 107 states voted Saturday in favour of the resolution, which called on Israel to pay Lebanon \$1.7

million in damages arising from its shelling of the U.N. compound at Cana, on April 18 last year.

Washington thinks the issue should come before the U.N. Security Council — where the United States has veto power — not the General Assembly's fifth committee, which approved the measure, said State Department spokesman

Nicholas Burns. "We are arguing, on procedural grounds... that only the Security Council has the power and the authority" to make such a decision, Mr. Burns said.

The spokesman would not comment on statements by Lebanese officials that Washington threatened

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Lebanese minister accuses truce committee of bias towards Israel

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Bweiz accused the international committee monitoring a ceasefire accord in South Lebanon of committing heresy and being partial to Israel.

"I think that the committee has, in recent days shown evidence of partiality in its opinions, especially in the manner it approached the problem of the booby-trapped device Israel put in the zone it occupies" in south Lebanon, he said at a news conference. This is "unprecedented heresy," he

added. The committee, which includes representatives from France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States, ruled early Monday that Israel was responsible for the death of a person in a roadside bombing Wednesday in southeast Lebanon.

The committee also discussed during its 17-hour meeting an alleged truce violation by Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas in the border area Wednesday. Hizbollah is responsible for

most of the anti-Israeli attacks in south Lebanon. "The monitoring group accepted as factual that a Lebanese armed group detonated a device placed in a power pole near Ain Mejdalin resulting in the death of a person," the committee statement said.

The group, however, said it also "accepted as factual that the person killed was an employee of the electric company and a member of a security unit cooperating

(Continued on page 7)

Bahrain forces arrest Shiite protesters

MANAMA (R) — Riots broke out in a Shiite village in Bahrain Monday. Witnesses said they were sparked by the death of a local man who was arrested during earlier protests.

The official Gulf News Agency (GNA) said a number of riot leaders were arrested when security forces broke up the disturbance in Sanabis, a village five kilometres west of Manama.

Fire-fighters battled flames in several areas and police chased young rioters through the streets, witnesses said. Police closed roads from the capital, barring reporters from Sanabis, which is one of a string of villages where Shiites periodically protest to demand political and economic reforms.

An unnamed interior ministry official told GNA late Monday that security forces took action after a group of people began riots and committed security violations.

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U.N. chief, Arafat call for more efforts to restore peace process

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. chief Kofi Annan and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat Monday called for intensified efforts to put the Middle East peace process back on track.

In a speech to a U.N. committee commemorating the 30th anniversary of the 1967 Israeli occupation of Arab land including east Jerusalem, Mr. Annan highlighted U.N. concerns

about Israel's decision to proceed with construction of a settlement in occupied east Jerusalem.

The Palestinians have boycotted peace talks since March 18 when Israel broke ground on the settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim.

"I sincerely hope that the parties will intensify their efforts to overcome existing obstacles to a speedy return to the peace process," he said.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, in a message read to the session, also affirmed "the necessity for the intensification of efforts, particularly by the co-sponsors of the peace process and the other concerned parties, in order to salvage the peace process."

The United States and Russia are the peace process co-sponsors.

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Hosni Mubarak in favour of Arab common market

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Monday he supported the creation of an Arab common market even if it initially grouped only a limited number of members.

"The Arab common market must be established, even if at the start it only groups a limited number of Arab countries," Mr. Mubarak told reporters.

His comments follow Syria's announcement of plans to create a common Arab market linking itself, Egypt and the six oil-rich Gulf Arab states.

"This market will be the real debut of Arab unity," Mr. Mubarak said, adding that it would be the only way of developing the economies of Arab nations. Mr. Mubarak said the market would avoid the

need for non-oil Arab countries to seek aid from oil-producing nations, but did not elaborate.

"Trade between Arab countries represents eight per cent of their total world trade. We must remedy this situation, and if inter-Arab trade reaches 60 or 70 per cent of the total, that will be a great success," he added.

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Palestinians order arrest of officer sought by Israel

RAMALLAH (AP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has ordered the arrest of a Palestinian intelligence officer sought by Israel in the deaths of two Arab land dealers, a security official said Tuesday.

In all, three Arab land dealers have been killed in the past month, apparently on suspicion they sold land to Jews. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he had

proof that the Palestinian National Authority was involved in the abductions of the victims and that he suspected it also was behind the killings.

Mr. Arafat has denied any official role in the deaths. The suspect ordered arrested Tuesday was Hussein Alyan, a Palestinian military intelligence officer in the West Bank town of Ramallah. It was not clear

whether Mr. Alyan was already in custody, and whether he would be put on trial.

Mr. Alyan was ordered arrested "so the Israelis don't get him first," said a Palestinian security official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Last week, Israel had issued a warrant for

Palestinians demand removal of memorial to slain soldier

KHAN YUNIS (AFP) — Palestinians have demanded the removal of a memorial for an Israeli soldier killed in riots last year which has been set up outside a Jewish settlement here, an official said Tuesday.

"The Israelis set up the memorial last night and we made a complaint," said General Khaled Abu Ula, head of the Palestinian district coordination office.

The monument was dedicated to a soldier killed outside the Gush Katif block of settlements near the Palestinian town of Khan Yunis in riots which broke out last September across the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The memorial was set up in a zone which comes under full Palestinian control, just outside the Gush Katif block, on the main road between Gaza City and Khan Yunis. Gen. Abu Ula told AFP.

"We met with the Israelis until late last night and told them the monument must come down. It is in a Palestinian zone and is a provocation to Palestinians who will pass it all the time," he said.

"If we're going to set up memorials for all the soldiers killed, then we Palestinians could set up memorials in Jaffa and Haifa and everywhere else," he said, referring to once-predominantly Palestinian cities inside Israel. The soldier, whose name was not mentioned, was one of 15 Israelis killed in four days of clashes which broke out when troops opened fire on rock-throwing Palestinian youths, sparking gun battles with Palestinian police. A total 71 Palestinians were killed in the clashes.

No less than six Algerian extremists killed in raids

ALGIERS (AFP) — At least four militants were killed Tuesday by security forces in the capital's old quarter following an intense exchange of gunfire, witnesses said.

The operation to flush out the militants from the Casbah began Monday afternoon and a police crack unit Tuesday launched an assault on a house which was partially torched.

"We were very scared," said one old woman who lives in the area. "The shooting lasted all night."

Witnesses said at least four militants were killed in the operation. Police could be seen shooting in the air Tuesday as they left the old quarter, its tiny alleyways littered with bullet casings. Residents urged journalists to leave the area quickly warning that the victims' supporters could come to the scene.

The Casbah, with its alleys and joined rooftops, is a favourite hiding place for commando units from the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the most radical of Algeria's militant groups fighting to overthrow the secular government.

Few residents dare move about in the Casbah where the militants have imposed their own rule of law.

In related developments Tuesday, local press reports said two other militants were killed by security forces overnight Sunday in a forest near the coast west of Algiers.

Five small underground



An Algerian policeman and a young boy carry a bag on Tuesday as they leave the site of a crack unit's assault on Islamic extremists in the old quarter of Algiers. At least four extremists were killed in the raid, which took place in the Casbah where commando units from the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) have imposed their own rule of law. Residents urged journalists to leave the area quickly, warning that the victims' supporters could come to the scene. The bag contained articles seized in an apartment which was partially torched (Photo by AFP)

forts were destroyed during the operation and large quantities of food, clothing and medicine were seized. The daily Le Matin said the raid was aimed at preventing any attacks during the summer months when vacationers crowd

the beaches in the area. The paper said there were two bomb attacks last week in the region which caused no casualties. As is usually the norm here, the number of casualties on the government

side during the raids has not been released. The clashes with militants are the first since last week's legislative elections which saw the ruling party of President Liamine Zeroual clinch the majority of votes.

Islamists, have-nots threaten Morocco's plan for new era

RABAT (AP) — Grooming itself for a new role in a new era, Morocco begins a marathon round of elections this week. The goals: to placate the Kingdom's restless subjects and make it a more palatable partner for the West.

But people like Rachid Bentahar, an unemployed university graduate, and Mohammad Abouhajar, a Muslim fundamentalist, could threaten King Hassan II's well-laid plans.

Like most of King Hassan's 26 million subjects, they are on the outside of an elitist club with a monopoly on wealth and decision-making. Growing pressure from this volatile mix of jobless youths and increasingly vocal Muslim activists could upset the system that has excluded both groups.

This kingdom on the northwestern shoulder of Africa, which gave the Arab World its first McDonald's and its largest mosque, is a chaotic mix of old and new. Donkeys vie

with shiny cars in city streets. Veils mix with miniskirts, and discotheques abound.

Still imbued with the legacy of French colonial rule, Morocco has long served the West as an anchor of stability in an uncertain region.

But a tightening of government spending risks further pinching the legions of unemployed and angering fundamentalists who think their country has strayed from its Islamic roots and is too close to the West.

January riots at the University of Casablanca by fundamentalists seeking better transportation showed a new militancy. Protesters, some reportedly armed with knives and chains, disrupted classes and threatened fellow students who didn't join the walkout.

The riots hinted Morocco may not be immune to the kinds of problems plaguing neighbouring Algeria.

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Arafat met secretly with Iraqi diplomat — reports

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat met secretly with Iraq's ambassador to Jordan this week, his first contact with a representative of President Saddam Hussein's regime since at least 1994, an Israeli newspaper reported Tuesday.

The Haaretz newspaper quoted Israeli political officials as saying they attached "considerable importance" to the meeting Sunday in Amman between Mr. Arafat and Ambassador Nuri Al Bis.

The Israelis were apparently informed of the meet-

ing by U.S. intelligence officials, the newspaper said, adding that Mr. Bis was considered close to Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahaf.

Officials in Palestinian National Authority (PNA) declined to confirm or deny the report.

Amaziah Baram, an expert on Iraq at Israel's Haifa University, said Mr. Arafat was not believed to have met with an Iraqi diplomat at least since he moved from Tunis to Gaza City to govern the

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Algerian government resigns

ALGIERS (AFP) — The Algerian government resigned Tuesday as expected following elections last week that yielded the country's first multi-party parliament. President Liamine Zeroual accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Ahmad Ouyahia and his cabinet, Mr. Zeroual's office said. The voting last Thursday, the first since 1992 when war with Islamist radicals broke out, produced a parliament dominated by supporters of Mr. Zeroual.

Turkey's Islamic government bars officials from military meeting

ANKARA (AP) — In a slap at the military, the Islamist-led government barred judges and prosecutors from attending a briefing called by top generals about Islamist radicalism, newspapers reported Tuesday. The generals issued invitations over the weekend to prosecutors, judges, academicians, businessmen, diplomats and journalists to attend a series of briefings on threats from radical Islam starting Tuesday. The relations between the government and the military have been tense for months over the government's efforts to put a greater Islamic stamp on Turkey. The military considers itself the standard-bearer for secularism.

Iran minister in Turkey amid growing tension

ANKARA (R) — Iran's deputy Foreign Minister, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, has arrived in Ankara amid increasing tension between the two neighbours following Turkey's month-long incursion into northern Iraq. "He brought a message from (Iranian President Hashemi) Rafsanjani to President Suleyman Demirel," a Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman told Reuters. "We do not know what the message says at the moment. He is expected to meet Mr. Demirel later (Tuesday)," the spokesman said. Mr. Boroujerdi arrived late Monday. The Turkish military has accused Iran, among other countries, of supplying separatist rebels of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) with sophisticated anti-aircraft missiles used to shoot down two Turkish army helicopters. Iran has publicly denied the accusations.

Egyptian police shoot dead suspected militant

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian police shot dead a suspected militant leader in the northern suburbs of Cairo, security sources said Tuesday. The man, Mustafa Abu Rawash, had opened fire on police who were coming to arrest him in his hideout in the suburb of Mataria Monday, they said. An automatic weapon was found with him, they added. Police suspected that Mr. Abu Rawash was the leader of a group of 40 members of the militant Gama'a Al Islamiya (Islamic group). The 40 were Monday remanded to appear before a military court on charges including planning attacks on important figures and senior security officials. The Gama'a is the largest group fighting to overthrow the Egyptian government and set up a strict Islamist system. More than 1,000 people have been killed in political violence in Egypt since the Gama'a began its military campaign against the security forces in 1992.

Kuwait pilots stage 24-hour strike

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) pilots and engineers on Tuesday went on a 24-hour strike demanding better wages costing the national flag carrier one million dollars, officials said. Captain Khalil Saleh said the strike began at 7:00 a.m. and involved some 600 pilots and engineers of the flag carrier. The strikers wanted improved wages and conditions. "The direct costs from stopping 18 flights from leaving Kuwait amounted to 400,000 dinars on the first day," KAC Chairman and Managing Director Ahmad Mishari told reporters. About 3,400 passengers beginning their journey in Kuwait and 800 transit passengers were affected by the stoppage, Mr. Mishari said in remarks quoted by the official Kuwait News Agency. Mr. Mishari said there would be a quick solution to the strikes, which pilots and engineers have threatened to repeat, but he would not give details.

Iran offers to organise second Islamic games for women

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Iran offered Tuesday to organise the December 10 second Islamic games for women after Pakistan pulled out for financial reasons, the official Kuwait News Agency said. Faiza Rafsanjani, daughter of Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani and the vice president of the Iranian Olympic Committee, made the announcement at the opening of an executive meeting of the Council for Sports Solidarity for Women in Islamic Countries. Ms. Rafsanjani said that 26 Islamic countries including Kuwait officially agreed to take part in the second games which will include basketball, volleyball, handball, tennis, gymnastics, table tennis, swimming, marksmanship, track and field, hockey, squash and badminton.

Sudan says SPLA fighters murdered southern official

KHARTOUM (R) — A Sudanese government newspaper said Monday the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) tortured to death a senior government official it took prisoner when it captured the provincial capital of Rumbek in the south.

Al Anba newspaper said Simon Mabior Malek, whose role as political adviser is equivalent to a minister in the government of Buheytrat state, was taken prisoner in April along with the state's governor and other members of his regional government.

SPLA rebels captured Rumbek, the capital of Buheytrat state, in April. A government-owned newspaper in May acknowledged the town's capture but the Khartoum government has never confirmed SPLA claims that the rebels had seized officials there.

"The political adviser of Buheytrat state died under torture in rebel hands after he was taken prisoner with the governor and the responsible persons in the government of Buheytrat state," Al Anba said.

The paper said Malek, a retired police major general, was "murdered on the personal orders of John Garang" in Tonj, which is also in Buheytrat state and was captured by the SPLA a few days after the fall of Rumbek.

Colonel Garang is the head of the SPLA which has been fighting since 1983 for independence or greater autonomy for the Aninist and Christian south from the Muslim and Arab north.

President Omar Hassan Bashir said Malek had sacrificed his life for his country, the official news agency SUNA said.

French vice squad searches ex-Qatari emir's hotel

PARIS (AFP) — France's vice squad, probing a luxury call girl network, searched the hotel suite here of Qatar's former Emir Sheikh Khalifa Ben Hamad Al Thani, but found nothing, officials said on Tuesday.

Sheikh Khalifa has a suite in the posh Crillon Hotel on the Place de la Concorde. The officials said vice squad officers were questioning former gendarmier captain, Paul Baril, in connection with a probe into the prostitution network, said to have served rich Gulf princes.

Mr. Baril, once a member of an anti-terrorist unit under the late President Francois Mitterrand that engaged in illegal phone-tapping, is suspected by magistrate Frederic N'guyen of being implicated in a large-scale international pimping network.

After he was dismissed

from the Elysee Palace unit, Mr. Baril set up a private security firm working for the emir.

The officials said Mr. N'guyen ordered searches of property in Paris owned by Mr. Baril and the offices of his security firm, but that police found nothing.

Several prostitutes and a Lebanese intermediary, Nazibuladlati Ladki, who supplied several networks with call girls, have accused Mr. Baril of importing Moroccan prostitutes to the French Riviera to entertain rich personalities from the Gulf.

Mr. N'guyen has already indicted five people for pimping in the case, including Ladki, a 48-year-old former Swedish model, Anika Brumark, and a photographer working for girly magazines, Jean-Pierre Bourgeois.

Israel warns Syria against any attack

TEL AVIV (R) — Top Israeli defence officials said Monday that Syrian President Hafez Al Assad would suffer quick defeat if he launched an attack against Israel.

"It must be made clear to Assad that there is only one place (to solve disputes) — that is at the negotiating table. If he should make a mistake, he will be overcome very quickly," Defence Ministry Director General Ilan Biran told Israeli Radio.

Israeli army chief Amnon Shahak, on a visit to the United States, said Monday preparations Syria had made over the last year would make it easier for them to launch an attack.

"Some of the preparations that were done among the Syrian forces in the last year make it a little bit easier on them to launch such

an attack," General Shahak said in remarks broadcast on Israeli Radio. The radio said Gen. Shahak was referring to a "surprise" attack.

Israel's Channel Two news reported last week that the Syrian army had completed a series of exercises aimed at increasing its readiness for war.

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said Monday that a way needed to be found to renew talks with Syria.

"A way must be found to renew talks between Israel and Syria, between Israel and Lebanon — to live a joint life of openness and prosperity," Mr. Mordechai was quoted as saying by the Israeli film news agency.

Israel and Syria have fought several wars and

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JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

15:30: Sweet Match
16:00: American Cup (Chile vs. Paraguay)
17:30: Border Town
18:00: French Programme
19:00: News in French
19:30: News Headlines
19:35: Comedy — Grace Under Fire
20:00: Soldier's Diary
20:30: Challenges
21:10: Drama — Spencer for Hire
22:00: News in English
22:30: Land's End
23:15: American Gothic

PRAYER TIMES

03:50: Fajr
05:25: (Sunrise) Duha
12:35: Dhuhr
16:16: Asr
19:45: Maghreb
21:20: Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terro Sancta Church Tel. 622366

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 5516345

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Mukhlis Mazahreh 530425

Dr. Wissam Hazyayin 748563

Dr. Mawther Al Qarni 779959

Dr. Mawther Al Kharib 839868

Firas pharmacy 661912

Ferdows pharmacy 890280

Al Asema pharmacy 637055

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Nairoukh pharmacy 623672

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazin Abu Bakir 276852

Al Quds pharmacy 774111

ZARQA:

Dr. Salah Al Safarini 987565

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Amman 21/35

Aqaba 21/35

Food Control Centre 637111

Deserts 13/29

Jordan Valley 19/34

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 25, Aqaba 34 Humidity

readings: Amman 53 per cent, Aqaba 38 per cent.

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, 644281/6

Akileh Maternity, 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir, 775111/26

Army, Marka 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

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Army, Marka 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:

Zarga Govt. Hospital 09/983323

Zarga National Hospital 09/900560

Ibn Sina Hospital 09/986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09/990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08(53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:05 Damascus (RJ)

09:25 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

09:30 Jeddah (RJ)

10:15 Larnaca (RJ)

Brother kills sister, husband to 'cleanse family honour'

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jerash police are questioning a 24-year-old man who allegedly shot and killed his younger sister and her husband for what the brother described as "immoral behaviour" in the Rashadieh village on Monday, official sources said.

Fatme Mahmoud, 18, and her 34-year-old husband Sa'ed Ibrahim, an Egyptian national, were reportedly gunned down by Fatme's sister Ahmad, who was apprehended by police shortly after the crime was committed.

The official source,

speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Jordan Times Tuesday that Ms. Mahmoud was allegedly raped by Mr. Ibrahim on May 20, 1997, and "were both put in detention at Qafqafa prison to protect their lives."

Two weeks later, the source said, the two were wed under the supervision of Jerash governor, and "the woman's family signed a JD 50,000 guarantee that their daughter and her husband would not be harmed."

On Monday, the victim's brother went to Mr. Ibrahim's house, and using an unlicensed gun shot and killed both of them.

According to the source, Mr. Mahmoud confessed to the murder and said he killed them to "cleanse his family's honour."

The source said Ms. Mahmoud's family decided to kill their daughter blaming her for the rape "because she knew Mr. Ibrahim, a worker, months before the incident."

Police contacted by the Jordan Times Tuesday evening confirmed the incident but refused comment.

Ms. Mahmoud became the 13 woman to be killed in a crime of honour in the Kingdom since the beginning of the year.

Mjali's resignation causes stir among lawyers

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The resignation three weeks ago of President of the Jordan Bar Association (JBA) Hussein Mjali in protest against the new amendments to the Press and Publication Law, has created an internal legal controversy at the association.

The resignation, led to a division among lawyers with one camp made of 150 lawyers demanded the holding of presidential by-election while the other arguing that the resignation

was still not final and urging Mr. Mjali to withdraw it.

"Since the president decision affects all the JBA assembly he should have consulted with us," said Mohammad Abu Jbarah, who leads the petitioners.

According to a JBA source, once the resignation is submitted the president cannot withdraw it and no party has the right to accept or refuse the resignation.

"The JBA board does not have the right to decide on such issues, and legally speaking the board has to call for by-elections," the

source who did not wish to be identified, said.

JBA internal regulations state that if the president resigns six months short of his term by-election should be held to replace him.

According to a JBA source "since more than six months are left, the JBA vice president cannot take over."

The problem which Mr. Mjali could face in this case is that he cannot run for the by-election since he has held the presidential seat for two terms.

But Samir Khirfan, a member of the JBA board,

told the Jordan Times that Mr. Mjali's resignation was not final since Mr. Mjali and three other Professional Association presidents will meet Thursday, to decide whether to go ahead with their resignation or not.

"Probably all the resignations will be withdrawn," Mr. Khirfan said.

The other three resigned president of the associations, are Presidents of the Jordan Engineers Association Leith Shbeilat, Jordan Geologists Associations Mohammed Saddin, and Jordan Dentists Associations Sa'id Abu Maizar.

Mr. Abu Jbarah, however, insists that Mr. Mjali's resignation is final. He said that Mr. Mjali's resignation was distributed to all the members of the association, that Mr. Mjali did not attend the Arab Bar Union meeting held in Tunisia, last week, and failed to preside over two board meetings in the past three weeks.

Asked what reaction he and his co-petitioners would take if Mr. Mjali withdrew his resignation, Mr. Abu Jbarah said that the "former" president should retract his resignation, in writing.

Qatari investors explore joint tourism projects

AMMAN (Petra) — The board chairman of Qatar's national hotels company, Sheikh Abdullah Ben Ahmad Al Thani, Tuesday started a five-day visit to Jordan aimed at probing the possibility of investing in tourism projects in the Kingdom.

Speaking at a meeting with Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji, Sheikh Abdullah said that his visit to Jordan at the head of a Qatari economic delegation aims at exploring the possibility of launching joint investment projects in tourism.

Briefing the Qatari delegation on the tourism situation in

the Kingdom, Mr. Biltaji expressed satisfaction with the gradual rise in the number of visitors to Jordan from the Arab Gulf countries.

"Gulf visitors to Jordan constitute 52 per cent of the total number of tourists that visited the Kingdom last year out of a total of 1.25 million visitors," Mr. Biltaji said.

He said that income from the tourism industry in Jordan corresponds to 37 per cent of the country's overall exports and equals to 11 per cent of the Kingdom's gross national product.

Officials from the Ministry of Tourism and the Jordan

Valley Authority outlined the Kingdom's tourism potential and infrastructure projects that have been carried out to boost tourism-related schemes.

Sheikh Abdullah, who is also assistant under-secretary of the Qatari ministry of industry, said that he planned to hold talks with senior government officials and meet with businessmen to discuss prospects for joint Jordanian-Qatari projects.

The talks were attended by Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Secretary General Akram Masarweh, Jordan's ambassador to Qatar Trad Al Fayed, and Qatar ambassador

Work starts on power link between Jordan, Egypt

CAIRO (J.T.) — Work started Tuesday on the construction of four huge and tall pylons on the two banks of the Suez Canal to carry 500-kilo volt cables across the canal as part of a project linking the electric networks in Jordan and Egypt, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The deputy director of the Electricity Authority in Egypt, Fikri Nuwar, said that each of the four pylons rises 240 metres above the ground and weighs 500 tonnes and are separated by a distance of 700 metres, Petra said.

Mr. Nuwar said that work on the four pylons which will cost approximately JD10 million and will be completed in six months, on time for making the linkage with the Jordanian national grid by the end of 1997.

Mr. Nuwar said that the pylons have been manufactured in Norway and Sweden and specially designed to withstand climate of the region.

Last Tuesday Jordan awarded a Bahraini firm a JD3.5 million contract for the supply of overhead cables for a power link between Jordan and Syria, a project which is scheduled to be completed before the end of 1998.

The power linkage project which started with Egypt and Jordan will extend to Syria, Turkey, Iraq and the five countries' power grids are expected to be linked by the year 2002. The regional project is being financed by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

Merger talks could cause split in JUDP

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A "minority faction" in the Jordanian Unionist Democratic Party (JUDP) is preparing to split, a JUDP source told the Jordan Times.

With ongoing negotiations for a progressive alliance between the social-democrats of the JUDP and the pan-Arabists of Al Mustaqbal, as well as high-profile independents, such as former Prime Ministers Ahmad Obaidat and Taher Masri, the separatist move would be aimed at giving the secessionists a stronger negotiating power in the talks for the projected alliance, the source suggested.

"They are trying to get to the negotiation table as a separate party, thereby obtaining higher positions in the new

formation," the JUDP source said.

A brief news item published in the Arabic daily Al Ra'i yesterday announced that 140 JUDP members, led by former JUDP Secretary General Mazen Saket, had resigned.

JUDP leader Issa Madanat strongly denied the report and told the Jordan Times that only 10 members had announced their resignations. "Strange enough, the news item also said that the 140 members had resigned in protest against the party's policies in dealing with the bread riots," Mr. Madanat said.

Former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti's move to raise bread prices, in August last year, sparked popular riots in the southern city of Karak, and some JUDP members blamed the

party for the participation of one of its leaders, Minister of Labour Hafez Shakhaneh, in that government.

"If that was the reason behind the resignations, why not publicising them at that time?" Mr. Madanat asked. Another JUDP source told the Jordan Times that, during a JUDP assembly on Friday, the "secessionists" announced the resignations of 10 members of the party's council, and presented a list of 140 names of members who they said intended to resign.

"The 10 council members' resignations were presented verbally, and the party asked for written resignations," which have not yet been handed in, the source said. As for the 140-name list, "those who we contacted by telephone, declared they were completely oblivious of

the issue," he said.

"Others' names in the list were compared to party's documents and did not match."

"Two of the members included in the list were by chance present at the assembly, and when they heard their names [among the resignees], they immediately denied they had ever intended to resign," he added.

"As soon as negotiations started for the establishment of a progressive alliance with [Head of Al Mustaqbal] Suleiman Arar and Messrs. Masri and Obaidat, they [the secessionists] started fearing that they would not obtain high posts in the new group, and therefore decided to split," the source concluded. Mr. Saket could not be reached Tuesday to comment on the report.

MAP holds annual dinner

AMMAN (J.T.) — The London-based society, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), Monday evening organised its annual charity dinner at the Jordan Intercontinental Hotel under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan as part of its efforts to raise funds for financing health care for Palestinians.

Addressing the diners, MAP's board chairman, Abdul Majid Shoman, expressed appreciation of Prince Hassan's interest in the society's charitable activities. Mr. Shoman urged Jordanians to support MAP noting that the society is now in more need than ever for aid and backing from humanitarian and philanthropic groups.

"Every dinar contributed to

the society will be used towards alleviating the sufferings of children who are deprived of medical care and sick women and old people who are in need of constant medical care," Mr. Shoman stressed at the banquet which was attended by HRH Prince Ali Ben Nayef, the private secretary to His Majesty King Hussein.

Mr. Shoman, who is chairman of the Arab Bank board of directors, told his audience that the Palestinian people's humanitarian needs are great and urgent. He added that all the donations made to the society since its establishment in the late 1980s have been put to good use and that the donations financed the purchase of equipment needed by

hospitals, the training of health workers, the purchase of equipment and for the management of "health" centres established in Jordan and Palestine.

The society has been sponsoring marches, raffle prizes and charity dinners to raise funds needed to finance the society's activities.

Mr. Shoman announced the winners of the annual charity lottery on three cars. One of the cars was won by Senator Kamal Shaer who promptly donated it to the society and was subsequently sold during the dinner banquet. The second winner was the Safeway Stores which donated JD2,000 to MAP.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ensour named acting defence minister

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued Tuesday appointing Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour as acting Minister of Defence during Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali's absence abroad accompanying His Majesty King Hussein on his European tour.

JTC donates JD10,000 to orphans

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Telecommunications Company Tuesday announced a donation of JD10,000 for Dar Al Hasan Charitable Society in the Irbid Governorate which cares for homeless and orphaned children. Company Chairman Walid Dweik, who made the announcement, said that he had decided on the donation during a visit to the society's premises by His Majesty King Hussein last Sunday. During the visit, the King also inaugurated the northern Irbid telephone exchange. Mr. Dweik said that the donation was in line with King Hussein's call for help to care for the needy children.

Crown Prince calls...

(Continued from page 1)

Through a combination of inter-governmental support and the perseverance of the private sector, we thus hope to use Jordanian experience and ingenuity to refashion the development landscape on a national scale.

"Of course none of this should be understood as preempts the demise of UNRWA. The agency has an invaluable role to play in educating and training Palestinians to administer their own future, whether in the autonomous area or throughout the rest of the Middle East. Nor should the Social Productivity Programme be viewed as changing in any way the political status of the Palestinian refugees, in terms of their political rights of return and/or compensation," stressed Prince Hassan.

The Crown Prince asserted that host countries cannot all by themselves assume entire responsibility for the Palestinian refugees.

"The notion that, in the wake of the peace process, host countries should single-handedly take on the multifarious responsibilities of the Palestinian refugees in their own bailiwick is, may I be frank, nothing short of suicidal. We are a developing country with national priorities that focus on alleviating the situation of the chronically underprivileged in our society; we cannot contribute more than what our resources allow," said the Prince.

While noting UNRWA's efforts in providing basic health, education and social services to all the refugees in its five areas of operation, Prince Hassan touched

upon what he called the "agency's thorniest problems, namely the lack of steady and adequate funding for the refugees."

The Prince said the agency continues to encounter a cash shortage in its main operating budget, the General Fund, as well as a deficit conservatively estimated at some \$40 to \$50 million on its overall regular budget for 1997.

"This is the dire situation which UNRWA finds itself in after close to decades of remarkable services to a large displaced Palestinian population in Jordan, the West Bank, Gaza Syria and Lebanon. This continuous concern for the comprehensive nature of Palestinian human dimension is an issue that has to maintain its momentum," said Prince Hassan.

The Prince criticised donor countries for "disengaging too soon from an agenda of relief and recovery that has not yet run its course."

"Given proper backing, UNRWA may yet provide the socio-economic infrastructure to pave the way for the transition to a just and comprehensive peace in the region," the Prince said.

The Prince pointed to the projects the government of Jordan funded under the Peace Implementation Programme (PIP) saying that this programme is a major contribution to the refugees that leads to human dignity. However, he added, UNRWA needs time, financial support, and most importantly an understanding of its constantly evolving role among the fluctuating population of camp residents in its five areas of operation.

Prince Hassan emphasised the importance of addressing social, economic and political aspects of security.

"In talking about security, I believe that the non-military aspects of security should be addressed. By this I mean soft security or the social, economic and political dimensions. I'm speaking here of anthropology, not of the sale of weapons totalling \$300 billion over the past six years to our region, but simple human dignity," said the Prince.

Prince Hassan asserted that only peace could restore international confidence and initiate the process of reconstruction. He added that Jordan has been working towards achieving just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region despite difficulties.

"The peace we have always sought has been guided by a global outlook towards the achievement of freedom, equality and respect for human dignity. To achieve this kind of peace we need to build bridges between cultures and nations and to transcend ethnic and religious differences and acknowledge each other's differences, embrace them and thus restore to each other a basic dignity to which humankind is entitled," the Prince said.

Prince Hassan reiterated Jordan's call for the promotion of a New International Humanitarian Order universally accepted and respected.

This call, which Prince Hassan said, was not vigorously pursued, is "more pertinent today than ever, and will go on being pertinent so long as conflicts and man-made disasters prevail."

The Prince concluded by saying that "I hope that open-minded leaders like yourselves are the people

who will make the difference by transcending the differences. I hope that you will be the ones who will make enlightened and informed decisions, each in his area, free from the constraints of ignorance that give fuel to the ills of this world: racism, fanaticism and the whole gamut of prejudice and stereotypes."

In his address to the meeting, UNRWA Commissioner General Peter Hansen said that despite UNRWA suffers from a financial deficit, it does not intend to cut down on the services the agency provides to refugees in all areas of operation.

He added that UNRWA will continue to provide basic health, education and social services to refugees until "the final status negotiations of the peace process are undertaken, concluded and implemented."

"As a result of your generosity, UNRWA has been

able to manage to raise enough funds to continue services uninterrupted and largely acceptable," Mr. Hansen told the donors.

In an address Assad Abdul Rahman delivered on behalf of the Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, he called on the donor nations to intervene and support the agency in its financial crisis.

He added that if for any reasons the agency would no longer be able to continue its services, the Palestine National Authority (PNA) is unable at this stage to take on the management of UNRWA's facilities.

"I'm concerned that with no donor support UNRWA will have to reduce its services to refugees. They see the strength of UNRWA programmes as a direct reflection of the commitment of the international community to a just and comprehensive outcome of the peace process," he said.



ACOR GETS USAID GRANT— U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the American Centre for Oriental Research (ACOR) Tuesday sign an agreement under which USAID will provide ACOR with a \$900,000 grant to help develop Jordan's historical and cultural heritage. Signing the agreement was U.S. Ambassador in Amman Wesley Egan, USAID Director Louis Lucke, and ACOR Director Pierre Biquet. The signing was attended by Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'ad Ben Zeid, Princess Majidah Ra'ad and Senator Layla Sharaf (Petra photo)

PLAY

• "Jadara Shines Anew" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

• Exhibition of American products at the Amman International Fair, Marj Al Hamam, until June 13.
• Photo exhibition entitled "Children of Planet Earth" by Takeyshi Tanuma at Haya Cultural Centre, Shmeisani, until June 12.
• Works by Abdul Basit Naqqash and Sa'd Hussein entitled "Heritage and Culture" at the gallery of the Jordan Plastic Artists Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 21.
• Exhibition on "The Beauty of the Jordanian Environment" by Omar Bassoul at the Royal Cultural Centre, until June 12.

• Art exhibition by Ibrahim Al Abdali at the Orient Art Gallery, Shmeisani, Issam Ajlouni Street, until June 19.
• Paintings by Yassin Shakir at Hamourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098) until June 15.
• Works by Guy Ferrer at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 15.
• Spring Exhibition of Plastic Art '97 at Greater Amman Municipality, Ras Al 'Ain, until June 30.
• One-of-a-Kind artists' book exhibit at the American Centre, Abdoun, until June 25.
• Exhibition of works by Farouq Lamhaz at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 19. Also displaying works by Paris-based Moroccan artist Najia Mahadi, until June 12, as well as showing an exhibition by architectural photographer Said Nuseibah entitled "The Farthest Mosque" and by contemporary Arab artists.

Taleban leader reportedly pays rare visit to Kabul

ISLAMABAD (R) — The reclusive chief of Afghanistan's purist Islamic Taleban militia is visiting Kabul for the first time since his blackbearded fighters seized the city in September, Taleban sources said Tuesday.

The sources, at Taleban headquarters in the southern city of Kandahar, told the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) that Mr. Omar had gone to the Afghan capital Saturday for talks with the ruling interim Shura (Council) there.

Mr. Omar was discussing "recent changes in Afghanistan," the sources said, apparently referring to the Taleban's disastrous defeat last month in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif. They said Mr. Omar, 38, would return to his home base in Kandahar after his meetings, but gave no date.

The black-turbaned leader, whose word is law to his mainly ethnic Pashtun followers, founded the Taleban in mid-1994 to oppose what he saw as the corrupt and oppressive rule of Islamic Mujahideen guerrilla factions who fought amongst themselves after the Communist government collapsed in April 1992.

Mr. Omar, who lost his right eye while fighting the former Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, made his base in Kandahar after his young Afghan recruits from Koranic schools in Pakistan seized the city in October 1994 and has rarely left it since.

His decision to visit Kabul appeared to indicate deep concern at the see-saw fortunes of the Taleban, who are seeking to impose strict Islamic rule throughout Afghanistan.

A Taleban spokesman said Tuesday Mr. Omar has not moved to Kabul following his army's recent reverses in northern Afghanistan.

Yar Mohammad Hematwal, head of the state owned news agency Bahktar told AFP: "We strongly reject this report."

Mr. Hematwal said Mr. Omar, known to his followers as the "Commander of the Faithful" had not visited Kabul.

"He has not come to Kabul at all," the Bahktar chief said adding that Mr. Omar was still at his headquarters in Kandahar, where the supreme Taleban leader "met with some Ulema (religious scholars)" Monday.

While maintaining close contacts with fellow Taleban, Mr. Omar shuns foreign journalists, leaving his subordinates to handle them.

On May 19, the Taleban forged a pact with northern General Abdul Malik, who led a mutiny against opposition leader Abdul Rashid Dostum and let Taleban fighters into Mazar-i-Sharif.

The pact, which for a few days gave the Taleban control of most of the north, collapsed amid friction between them and Mazar-i-Sharif's ethnic Uzbek and Shiite Muslim Hazara people.

Gen. Malik's Uzbek troops combined with the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat militia to expel the Taleban, who fled the city on May 28, leaving at least 300 dead and 700 prisoners.

While the Taleban were losing almost all their newly-gained territory in the north, opposition Commander

Ahmad Shah Masood broke out of his native Panjsher Valley to capture the strategic town of Jalal-Os-Siraj at the foot of the Salang Pass.

Fighting has rumbled around the town for the past two weeks, but the Taleban have failed to reopen the Salang Highway that links Kabul to the north, where a Taleban force of up to 3,000 is stranded in Pul-i-Khumri, besieged by Gen. Malik's Uzbeks and an Ismaili militia that formerly held the town.

Taleban sources quoted by AIP said opposition forces had launched attacks on the Taleban on all three frontlines around Pul-i-Khumri Tuesday morning, but failed to break through.

The Taleban said they had killed at least 10 opposition fighters and captured many heavy weapons. Four Taleban militiamen were killed in combat, they added.

The sources said opposition forces had been thrown back on two of the three frontlines, but fighting was continuing on a third. They did not specify where battles were going on.

There was no independent account of the clashes and opposition spokesmen could not immediately be contacted. In a separate development, a senior official of the ousted Afghan government reiterated accusations of Pakistani backing for the Taleban militia.

Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzai told a news conference Monday night that Islamabad was helping the Taleban recruit new fighters among pupils at Islamic religious schools in Pakistan.

"We have documentary evidence that the Pakistanis are involved in the recruitment of thousands of militias for the Taleban," he said in the northern opposition stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif. He did not produce the evidence.

Witnesses in Pakistan and Afghanistan say thousands of Taleban recruits have crossed the border since the Taleban were kicked out of Mazar-i-Sharif on May 28 in a humiliating defeat.

Mr. Ghafoorzai was deputy foreign minister in ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani's government, which the Taleban drove from Kabul when they captured the Afghan capital on Sept. 27.

He said the Pakistani Jamaat-i-Islami Party was particularly active in the recruitment campaign.

"We cannot accept that the Pakistani authorities are completely unaware of this process," Mr. Ghafoorzai said.

Pakistan denies supporting the Taleban, but is widely seen as the militia's best foreign friend, becoming the first country formally to recognise the Taleban government in Kabul on May 25.

Mr. Ghafoorzai voiced concern that Pakistan might take a direct role in the Afghan conflict after recent reverses suffered by the Taleban in northern Afghanistan.

"In the light of widespread (Taleban) defeats, I think that there is clear concern...that the Pakistani authorities may openly get involved in the Afghan conflict," he said.



A nurse holds a baby at the Saint Gabriel's Babies' Home in Melbourne. Hundreds of Australian orphans were used as medical guinea pigs and injected with experimental vaccines from the 1940's to 1970, the Melbourne Age newspaper reported Tuesday (Reuter photo)

Australian orphans used in vaccine trials — paper

MELBOURNE (R) — Hundreds of Australian orphans, some of them babies, were used as medical guinea pigs and injected with full adult doses of trial influenza vaccines to test for toxic reactions, The Age said.

A group representing former wards of the state in Victoria, Innovate, called Tuesday for a public inquiry. "The government was totally responsible for these children and they used them as guinea pigs," Innovate spokeswoman Heather Bell said in a radio interview.

The Australian Democrats, a left-leaning political party, backed the call for an official inquiry.

The Victoria state government pledged to make inquiries, on a case-by-case basis, on behalf of anyone who believed they may have been subjected to vaccine trials as infants at the time. But Victoria's health minister, Denis Napthine, stressed that the trials were carried out at a time when influenza, diphtheria and poliomyelitis were killer diseases.

"Today it would not happen," Mr. Napthine told state radio.

"Any such treatment or any such trial could only be done with the proper consent process in place."

National Health Minister Michael Wooldridge agreed. "These things did occur, they weren't secret. They were done openly and published in the medical literature and they were done according to the ethics of the time," he told reporters.

"Today we would say it shouldn't have happened," Eliza Hall Institute, which conducted some of the trials, said diseases were "raging" at orphanages at the time. Many of the orphanages were run by church orders.

"The trials were carried out with the ready cooperation of the sisters in charge of the institutions," institute spokesman David Vaux said.

Michael Wooldridge agreed. "These things did occur, they weren't secret. They were done openly and published in the medical literature and they were done according to the ethics of the time," he told reporters.

"Today we would say it shouldn't have happened," Eliza Hall Institute, which conducted some of the trials, said diseases were "raging" at orphanages at the time. Many of the orphanages were run by church orders.

Brazzaville calm after days of pitched conflict

PARIS (AFP) — Sporadic rifle fire rattled the Congolese capital Brazzaville Tuesday, although the city was largely calm after five days of intense fighting, a French army spokesman there said.

At 11 a.m. (1000 GMT), the situation was "generally calm," the spokesman told AFP in Paris.

Only a few rounds from Kalashnikov assault rifles could be heard, and the spokesman blamed them on "a few isolated elements."

An aid worker based in Kinshasa on the other side of the Congo River from Brazzaville and who is in permanent contact with colleagues in Brazzaville also said calm had returned to the troubled Congolese capital.

"There were a few shots at around five in the morning (0400 GMT), then things calmed down," he said.

As far as he knew, he said, the warring parties in Brazzaville had not used

heavy weapons Tuesday in contrast with clashes on previous days.

The clashes have pitted militiamen loyal to a former Marxist strongman against army troops in the former French colony in West Africa.

The former strongman Denis Sassou Nguesso said late Monday that he accepted an offer by Gabon to mediate a ceasefire with the government of President Pascal Lissouba.

This followed the announcement in Paris that French President Jacques Chirac had secured an agreement in principle for a ceasefire between the two sides. But hours later, sporadic artillery fire could still be heard in Brazzaville.

The fighting broke out Thursday when the army attacked Mr. Sassou-Nguesso's home as part of a campaign to disarm private militias ahead of July 27 elections.

Uganda holds 50 former Zaireans for helping rebels

KAMPALA (AFP) — The Ugandan army said Monday it was holding some 50 people from the former Zaire who surrendered or were captured fighting with rebels in Western Uganda.

Two Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) citizens surrendered Sunday, Colonel Peter Karim told AFP. Some of the prisoners were captured three months ago, he added.

Those detainees who surrendered voluntarily will be handed over to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for repatriation, but those caught during active combat between the rebel Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) movement and Ugandan troops will be tried in Ugandan courts, Mr. Karim said.

But a UNHCR official here said the agency had not been contacted by the Ugandan government about the repatriation.

Mr. Karim said about 600 DRC civilians joined the ADF in November last year and were given arms and promised that they would

be paid \$500 each and given cars.

"The Zaireans were told that when the ADF took over Kasese (Western Uganda's regional capital) they would be given cars. Some unemployed (people) thought they would come to Uganda, loot a bit and go back home," said Mr. Karim.

Many of the DRC nationals recruited into the ADF have since returned to their country, Mr. Karim added.

The ADF — a combination of an extremist Muslim group known as Tablig and remnants of the defunct rebel National Army for the Liberation of Uganda — was originally based in eastern Zaire.

The group attempted to invade Uganda in November but was repulsed by Ugandan troops and its bases were overrun by a combined force of Ugandan soldiers and forces under Laurent Kabila who is now president of the DRC.

The ADF is now said to have six bases in the Ruwenzori Mountains.

3 passengers survive Mongolia plane crash

ULAN BATOR (R) — A Mongolian Airlines (MIAT) plane carrying at least 12 people crashed Tuesday while on a flight from the capital, Ulan Bator, to the town of Mandalgobi in the central Gobi district, aviation officials said.

Three survivors, all seriously injured, had been recovered from the wreckage of the Chinese-made Yun-12 aircraft that crashed while trying to land at Mandalgobi Airport, an official at the airport control tower said by telephone.

The plane was carrying 10 passengers and two crew on the flight to Mandalgobi, about 280 kilometres south of the capital, an Ulan Bator Airport official said.

However, the Mandalgobi official said there may have been more people on the plane, which usually carries 12 passengers and two crew.

Officials said it was difficult

to estimate the exact number of dead because rescue workers had recovered parts of bodies and this was hampering calculation of the final toll.

The crash was the first reported by Mongolia's state-run MIAT airline since late 1995 when the airline's 20th fatal crash in 70 years killed 41 people.

Mongolia's Prime Minister M. Enkhsaikhan said last week the government planned to privatise MIAT as part of a plan to sell off at least 200 state businesses in the next 18 months.

MIAT had pledged in late 1995 to implement great improvements in air safety after a spate of crashes, saying that it would boost pilot training, curb employee negligence and take away licences of drunk pilots.

A team of officials had already left Ulan Bator for the crash site, the Ulan Bator Airport official said.

Haiti's premier resigns

PORT-AU-PRINCE (R) — Haitian Prime Minister Rosny Smarth announced his resignation Monday after months of criticism of his government's economic policies and failure to address the impoverished nation's social ills.

Mr. Smarth's announcement, made in Parliament, meant that President Rene Preval would have to appoint a new prime minister, who would then name a new cabinet, all less than a week before a runoff election for seven out of 27 seats in Haiti's Senate.

"The government has not responded to the needs of the people. The image in certain sectors is no good and the government does not inspire confidence," Mr. Smarth said, speaking in Creole.

"And about the political plan, I don't agree with the way the game is being played, without principle, without ethics. For that reason, I think it is time that another team takes the reins," he continued.

Haitian President Rene Preval, who was not in Parliament when Mr. Smarth announced his res-

ignation, appointed the former agricultural economist prime minister 15 months ago. He was ratified by the Senate on Feb. 27, 1996.

But in recent months Mr. Smarth has been the focus of general strikes and violent demonstrations by popular organisations that oppose the government's economic plan, which calls for privatisation of nine state enterprises, and have criticised his government for failing to address the impoverished nation's devastating social ills.

In mid-May, angry mobs demanding Mr. Smarth's resignation burned cars and tires and exchanged gunfire with police as two days of student demonstrations flared into two days of general rioting. The rioting was stopped after U.S. soldiers and U.N. peacekeeping troops joined Haitian National Police units in the streets.

Members of the international community in Haiti, including U.S. Ambassador William Swing, were in parliament for the announcement. But U.S. officials offered no immediate comment.

Top ASEAN official in Burma to convey decision

RANGOON (R) — Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi arrived here Tuesday to formally notify Burma of its admission next month into the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), government officials said.

Mr. Badawi, accompanied by ASEAN Secretary General Ajit Singh, was scheduled to meet with senior Burmese military government leaders later Tuesday.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

It made a landmark decision late last month at a foreign ministers' meeting in Malaysia to accept Burma, Laos and Cambodia into its fold as new members.

"The main purpose of Mr. Badawi's visit here is to convey formally the decision to admit Myanmar (Burma) into ASEAN to our government," a Foreign Ministry official told Reuters.

Malaysia's Foreign Minister, now acting as chairman of the regional grouping's standing committee, met with his Cambodian counterparts in Phnom Penh Monday for the same purpose.

He is expected to travel to Laos later this week on a similar mission.

ASEAN's decision to admit Burma was surrounded by controversy. It sparked an outcry from foes of Burma's Ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and strong criticism from human rights activists and the United States.

Those opposing Burma's entry said the ruling military junta regularly suppressed human rights and curbed the political activities of the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Burmese official media Tuesday showered praise on ASEAN leaders for accepting Burma as a member.

7 people killed in Pakistan violence

MULTAN (R) — At least seven people, including two Sunni Muslim militants, were killed in a surge of violence in Pakistan overnight, police said Tuesday.

The two militants were shot dead overnight in the town of Saray Saddu, near the city of Multan in Punjab province, and five people were killed in a drive-by shooting in Karachi.

Police said the two activists in the Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) organisation were killed by four men on two motorcycles.

They identified the victims as the local SSP president, Chaudhry Munir Ahmad, and its treasurer, identified as Mohammad Qasim.

Ahmad's relatives told police the two men, who were also on a motorcycle when they were attacked, had received anonymous letters warning them to stop their work for SSP.

Sectarian violence is rife in Punjab province, where the SSP and other Sunni groups are pitted against Shiite Muslim factions in a feud which has cost more than 70 lives this year.

On Monday, a Shiite activist, Syed Iqbal Hussain, was shot dead in the Punjab city of Faisalabad and two gunmen killed a Shiite radio producer, Shamsuddin Haider, at his home in the southern Punjab provincial town of Bahawalpur.

A Shiite lawyer, Ghulam Mustafa Jafri, was shot dead in the Punjab capital Lahore Friday.

Sunni-Shiite disputes over Islamic beliefs have often spilled into violence in Pakistan that cost at least 170 lives last year. Shiites form about 15 per cent of the mainly Sunni population of more than 130 million.

In a separate incident, gunmen shot dead five people, including a young woman, in a drive-by shooting in the southern port city of Karachi late Monday night.

Police said unidentified gunmen sprayed bullets from a car at a shop in Karachi's eastern Korangi area, where a group of youngsters were playing a board game.

Three male victims, all in their early 20s, died instantly, while a fourth died later in hospital. A 16-year-old girl was also killed by a stray bullet, police said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility and it was not clear if the attack was politically motivated.

Witnesses said tension gripped the whole area after the shooting and armed men took to the streets firing in the air.

More than 50 people have been killed in ethnic, political and sectarian violence in Karachi this year, compared to 500 last year and about 2,000 in 1995.

Locals move out as Rwandan army battles Hutu militiamen

RUHENGARI, (AFP) — This town in Northwestern Rwanda is tense as troops of the Tutsi-dominated army battle Hutu guerrillas nearby, but a report by a human rights association said the death toll was at least 16. Mr. Rucagwa himself is a controversial figure.

The Tutsi-dominated government which took power after Rwanda's 1994 civil war branded him a leading perpetrator of genocide, saying he was a member of a death squad, but then appointed him prefect two months ago, saying an investigation had cleared him.

The Parliament meanwhile is calling for his suspension while further investigations are made.

In the other incident last Thursday, a military convoy was attacked. Two soldiers were reportedly killed, while an army major escaped unhurt. The vehicles had been burned, leaving two large black marks on the road, and smashed windscreen glass scattered about. Local people speak of constant gunbattles in the surrounding hills. Some of them said they had spent the previous two days hiding in

the hills.

At the ordination of the bishop, which drew a crowd of about 1,000, people were talking of three bodies which had been left lying where they were shot a few kilometres from the church.

An official said they were suspected Hutu militiamen who had run into an army patrol at four o'clock in the morning. No one wanted to collect the bodies and risk being associated with the militiamen.

There is much talk of attacks and military operations. Indeed, the ordination itself was supposed to have been held at Shyira, south of Rubengeri, the centre of the diocese. Security considerations, and difficult access, prompted a move to Rubengeri town. Bishop Ken Barham said.

The Rwandan news agency said a number of shops had been destroyed at the Byangabo trading centre on the Rubengeri-Gisenyi road when the army attacked militiamen who were hiding there.

It also reported that 36 "infiltrators" had been killed in clashes with the army in Kinigi commune on May 25.

Cornered Tiger rebels stage desperate attacks in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil Tiger rebels blasted ammunition dumps, destroyed a vital bridge and crippled a helicopter gunship Tuesday in a desperate bid to halt a Sri Lankan army offensive, officials said.

More than 500 members of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) staged do-or-die attacks in Vavuniya district, seriously blunting the biggest army offensive against them, officials said.

The attacks were concentrated in Thandikulam, within close proximity to the government-held town of Vavuniya, 260 kilometres north of Colombo, officials said adding that the rebels blew up a bridge in the area.

A Russian-built MI-24 attack helicopter was also hit by the guerrillas. The pilots landed safely but the aircraft was unserviceable, official sources said.

A military ammunition

dump in Thandikulam was destroyed by the Tiger guerrillas who also blew up the nearby Notchchimottai bridge along the main highway to the northern peninsula of Jaffna.

A second ammunition dump was blasted just west of Vavuniya at Samayapuram causing casualties on both sides, but there were no immediate details.

"There are casualties on both sides and we still don't know the exact details," the military spokesman here, Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe, said adding that troops had begun "clearing operations" in the area.

The Defence Ministry in a statement said that over 500 Tiger guerrillas were involved in the main attack against a military base at Thandikulam. However, the attack was beaten off, the Ministry said.

"Troops fought back valiantly to completely re-

pulse the attack causing very heavy casualties among the terrorists," the ministry said adding that casualties figures on both sides will be known after clearing the area.

Local residents in Vavuniya said three civilians were killed and 25 wounded when the Tigers pounded the town with artillery guns Tuesday morning. At least 36 shells hit the town.

"One of the victims was a small boy whose head had been severed," a resident said after visiting the district's main hospital. "There is a lot of tension in Vavuniya. Shops and schools closed because of the fighting."

The latest Tiger attack was seen as the most ferocious since security forces launched a major drive on May 13 to open a key land route to the island's northern peninsula of Jaffna through rebel-held territory.

Defence sources said the Tiger counter-attack will slow down the military advance. Military casualties were high because two ammunition dumps at Thandikulam and Samayapuram went up in flames and devastated a large area.

The army has deployed two divisions or some 20,000 men to open a key road to the northern town of Jaffna and have advanced about 15 kilometres. They needed to cover another 60 kilometres.

Before Tuesday's attack, at least 150 government soldiers and 410 Tiger rebels had been killed according to military estimates. The rebels say they lost under 100 cadres killed.

The Tiger guerrillas are campaigning for independence in the island's north and east. More than 50,000 people have been killed in the separatist conflict in the past 25 years.



Sri Lankan soldiers stand near the bodies of some Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam guerrillas who were killed in battle as government troops advanced into the northern rebel-held territory. The Defence Ministry said troops had advanced more than 20 kilometres into rebel-held territory (Reuters photo)

General withdraws in U.S. adultery controversy

WASHINGTON (R) — Air Force General Joseph Ralston Monday withdrew from consideration to become Chairman of the U.S. military Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in an uproar over an adulterous affair he had 13 years ago.

But Defence Secretary William Cohen said he asked Gen. Ralston, 53, to re-main as Vice Chairman of the powerful Joint Chiefs and that Gen. Ralston agreed. Meanwhile, he said, he was reviewing other candidates for the nation's top military job.

"This is solely my decision and I make it with a sense of regret," Gen. Ralston said in a statement after he met privately with Mr. Cohen over whether he should continue as a candidate to succeed Army General John Shalikashvili, who retires Sept. 30.

"My regret is that the public discussion surrounding my potential nomination blurred the facts in a number of recent cases and gave the appearance of a double-standard regarding military justice," said Gen. Ralston, whose two-year term as Vice Chairman would end in February of 1998. "I don't believe that there is a double-standard," he said.

President Bill Clinton said Monday he respected Gen. Ralston's decision to withdraw and was pleased he was staying on.

"For 32 years, in war and peace, Gen. Ralston has served our nation with uncommon distinction," Mr. Clinton said in a statement.

"The Joint Chiefs and our country will benefit from his continued service."

Gen. Ralston admitted last week that he had an adulterous relationship while separated from his first wife more than a decade ago. Despite that, Mr. Cohen said at the time that Gen. Ralston was high on his list of candidates for JCS chairman.

That came after the air force only last month forced its first woman bomber pilot, Lieutenant Kelly Flinn, to quit to avoid a court-martial on adultery and other charges, prompting some in Congress to charge uneven application of military justice.

Lawmakers said after the controversy broke that the Senate might reject Gen. Ralston if he were to be nominated by Mr. Clinton for the Joint Chiefs' leadership.

Senator Olympia Snowe, a Maine Republican and the only woman on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said it was "absolutely essential" that standards be applied uniformly to individuals regardless of rank or gender if the military was to maintain its effectiveness and retain public confidence.

A senior defence official, who asked not to be identified, said Mr. Cohen did not press Gen. Ralston to withdraw but the general made the decision after talking to lawmakers and deciding that to continue would be "draining, difficult and distracting," although he thought he could win confirmation.

Woman dumps dead newly born baby, parties at prom

FREEHOLD (R) — A teenager who gave birth at her high school prom dumped the baby in the trash and then went back to dancing with her date, prosecutors said Monday.

The 19-year-old senior from Forked River, about 65 kilometres south of New York, even requested a song from the disc jockey while the dead infant boy lay in a trash can inside the blood-spattered rest room.

Authorities said an autopsy showed the child was alive in the birth canal before being born at the Friday night dance. However, it was not clear if the baby had breathed, a sign it might have been able to survive outside the womb.

"We have not determined whether the baby was alive after birth," Monmouth County Assistant Prosecutor Robert Honecker told reporters at a news conference.

"We need more tests to determine whether it was alive independent of the mother."

He said the tests would include microscopic examination of the baby's lungs to determine if the child had been able to survive. The infant had no birth defects or injuries.

The autopsy results will determine whether the student from Lacey Township High School would be charged. Mr. Honecker said possible charges included homicide or endangerment of a child.

The mother's name has not been released. She has not been arrested.

A cleaning woman found the dead 6-pound, 6-ounce (2.9-kilogramme) baby inside a toilet stall trash can at the hall where the dance was being held. The child was born full term.

Students at the high school had not known the woman was pregnant. She wore a loose-fitting dress to the prom and was back on the dance floor within an hour of giving birth.

The woman later went to a hospital. The incident shocked the middle-class town of Forked River, a tight-knit bedroom community of about 22,000 people on New Jersey's Atlantic shore.

"All of my friends don't believe that a girl could ever put her baby into a garbage can," Jane Reeves, a 16-year-old junior at Lacey Township High School, told Reuters.

"I think she should pay the penalty for doing this."

Internet tackles fear of Big Brother

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A Federal Trade Commission (FTC) hearing dealing with the right to electronic privacy gets under way Tuesday to deal with growing concern over personal information collected over the Internet.

"Privacy is the key consumer-protection issue of the information age," said FTC official Christine Varney.

Nearly half of the 100 most frequented web sites "are collecting personal information from users through online registrations, surveys, and forms," for marketing purposes, according to the Electronic Privacy Information Centre (EPIC).

"Information is also collected surreptitiously with (computer software dubbed) Cookies" installed in home computers, said the online privacy group who will attend the hearing.

When a user links up with a particular site, it downloads the "Cookie," automatically updating the site's database.

Such software, undetectable by beginners, make for more efficient linkups by keeping a list of the user's personal preferences. They also allow marketing firms to better target their messages. "Personalised ad delivery is at the heart of Internet advertising," which accounts for 90 per cent of worldwide computer network revenues, said Chris Evans, president of Online Advertising Firm Accipiter.

Information gathered in this manner, can just as easily be sold to database companies, who in turn peddle the valuable information to marketing firms.

The biggest online service, Lexis Nexis, caused a scandal a year ago when it launched a person-locator database called P-Trak. It updated data from 340 million subscribers, who for \$90 could

look up the name, address, telephone, birthdates and other information of their fellow subscribers.

Lexis-Nexis has proposed to delete the names and data of anybody who requests it. More than one million customers have done so, said Time Davis.

Databank companies will appear Tuesday before the FTC, which monitors privacy abuse on cyberspace.

Lexis Nexis is expected to make a formal proposal establishing principles "for balancing the legitimate business interest in access to important information with the privacy concerns of the public," Mr. Davis said.

Computer database firms dread having restrictive guidelines imposed by the government, but are well aware that online privacy is a major stumbling block in their industry's development.

More than 70 per cent of U.S. web users have more misgivings about providing personal information over the Internet than over the telephone or by messenger, according to a Boston consulting group survey. Forty-one per cent click off a site rather than asked for personal information.

The FTC hearing will focus on two key proposals: The non-profit group Etrust — backed by IBM, Netscape and ATT — would tell subscribers exactly what their personal information would be used for. Other consumer database companies such as Internet would give online users the technological means to determine the information gathered on a Cookie.

Most important, said Electronic Frontier Foundation Executive Director Lori Fena, is that web surfers "need assurance that this information will be treated responsibly."

Old Kim's pictures coming down, Young Kim's going up — Seoul

SEOUL (AFP) — Street portraits of late North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung are coming down and those of his son going up in a possible sign the junior Kim is ready to take full power, a senior South Korean official said Tuesday.

Yonhap news agency quoted Unification Minister Kwon O-Kie as saying a "recent" order to replace huge wall posters and placards of the elder Kim could signal that Kim Jong-Il will assume his father's official posts next month.

July 8 marks the third anniversary of the elder Kim's death and what many North Korean diplomats have described as the end of the mourning period for him.

Since 1994 the isolated state has publicly recognised the junior Kim as the country's "great leader," but left vacant the positions of head of state and secretary general of the powerful Workers' Party.

"There is a possibility that Kim Jong-Il will formally take over after July 8," Yonhap quoted Mr. Kwon as saying, adding that there did not seem to be "any obstacle" to his assuming the two titles.

Mr. Kwon's statement, to a meeting of local government and home ministry officials here, contrasted with conclusions drawn at talks here Monday between U.S., Japanese and American officials.

After that meeting they said there appeared to be no signs, such as mass preparations or invitations to foreign dignitaries, of the junior Kim's ascension to full power.

Other analysts have questioned whether it would "auspicious" for Kim Jong-Il to take power at a time of crippling food shortages which have forced North Korea to depend on foreign food aid to feed its 22 million people.

Foreign aid workers monitoring food distribution in the isolated state since 1995 have noted that in an increasing number of street posters the father and son appear side-by-side, in an apparent effort to minimise the transition.

Mr. Kwon also told officials at the briefing that his ministry expected the number of defectors from the North to the South in 1997 to rise from the current 46 to 100 by the end of the year.

It is expected to enhance friendly relations and understanding between both," the statement said.

Chinese and Indian armies battled briefly on their Himalayan border in 1962 but tensions have eased in recent years with a series of high-level exchanges and agreements.

Beijing and New Delhi signed a pact in 1993 to ensure peace along their 4,000 kilometres border and last year initiated a treaty to reduce troops and arms in the disputed regions.

India's vice chief of army staff, Lieutenant-General V.P. Malik, visited China in late May.

China's general leads team to India

NEW DELHI (R) — A senior Chinese military officer is visiting India to help strengthen ties between the two Asian giants, which fought a border war in 1962, officials said Tuesday.

Lieutenant-General Liao Xilong, leading a seven-member delegation, met India's chief of army staff, General Shankar Roychowdhury, Monday, the government said in a statement.

The Chinese visitors, who arrived on June 6 and were set to depart Thursday, also met the vice chiefs of India's army, navy and air force.

Lt-Gen. Liao is Commander of the Hengdu military region in Southwestern China, the statement said. An army spokesman said it was the first time a Chinese regional commander had visited India.

"We are pursuing increased military-to-military contact for the sake of confidence-building," the spokesman said.

The government statement said it was significant that the Chinese commander was accompanied by foreign affairs officials.

"And as one of the frequent high and medium-level contacts in consonance with diplomatic parleys between the two countries,

Death toll from violent rainstorms in China hits 249

BEIJING (AFP) — Floods and landslides in Southwestern China have killed at least another 40 people, a local official said Tuesday, raising to 249 the estimated death toll from fierce rains in recent days.

Some 324 others were seriously injured in nine cities and counties of Zhaozong prefecture in Yunnan province, when rains last Wednesday and Thursday unleashed the disaster, local government official Cai Xulian told AFP.

Landslides caused most of the deaths, he said.

The towns of Yiliang, Daguan, Yanjin and Zhenxiang were the worst affected, Mr. Cai said, adding that mudslides and rising waters blocked roads and crippled electricity and water facilities.

The onslaught of seasonal rains also sparked landslides in neighbouring Sichuan province and serious flooding in Hunan province, including its capital, Changsha.

"Millions have been affected" the official China Daily said, citing a report from the State Flood Control Headquarters (SFCH).

Vice Premier Jiang Chunyun was quoted as expressing sympathy for the victims and that he hoped local authorities could minimise the damage caused with central government support.

Hong Kong's Ta Kung Pao newspaper reported that lightning alone during the storms killed 29 people in central Hubei province.

The victims were killed in Xiaogan during rainstorms last Friday, the China-supported daily said.

Flooding after the storms affected some 1.68 million people, destroying more than 21,000 houses and closing 200 factories in Hubei, it said. Direct economic losses were put at 400 million yuan (\$48.2 million).

Officials in Sichuan's Meigu county estimate that at least 150 people were killed in the landslides that struck early Thursday.

Four days after the torrent of mud and rocks ploughed through four mountain villages, three were confirmed dead and 147 still missing.

At least 300 other people had been injured, the newspaper said, adding more than 400 hectares (990 acres) of farmland had been buried. Early estimates of total damage came to eight million yuan (\$963,855).

Sichuan Vice-Governor Ou Zegao went to the scene to coordinate relief operations, it added. Heavy rains in Hunan caused flash floods early Saturday that killed about 30 people and left eight missing, according to recent figures.

China calls for caution on Japan-U.S. alliance

BEIJING (R) — China Tuesday cautioned Tokyo to act carefully to avoid destabilising the Asia-Pacific region with moves to boost its military profile and strengthen the security alliance between Japan and the United States.

Washington and Tokyo at the weekend unveiled new proposals to revamp their strategic relationship and increase potential military cooperation — a highly sensitive move in China, which suffered hugely from Japanese aggression in World War II.

"We hope Japan can take lessons from history by acting cautiously and walking the road of peaceful development," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Cui Tiankai.

"The Japan-U.S. security alliance is a bilateral arrangement formed during the cold war," Mr. Cui told a regular news briefing.

"With the end of the cold war, there is no reason for this kind of arrangement to go beyond the scope of the two sides," he said, adding that limiting cooperation would prevent the introduction of instability to the Asia-Pacific region.

Japan's military intentions were always a matter

of extreme sensitivity among its Asian neighbours, Mr. Cui said.

Tokyo has been keen to soothe Chinese concerns over plans to bolster its alliance with the United States that are expected to give Japan its highest military profile in Asia since the collapse of its World War II imperial dreams.

Emissaries sent by Tokyo to Beijing to explain the revised Japan-U.S. defence guidelines had promised that the general scope of the alliance would be unchanged and that Japan's pacifist constitution would not be breached, Mr. Cui said.

Japanese diplomats said senior officials from Tokyo's Foreign Ministry and Defence Agency visited Beijing Sunday and Monday to explain the pact.

Last week, defence policymakers from Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) briefed Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen on the U.S.-Japan defence plans.

Washington officials are also expected to visit China to brief leaders on the new look alliance, but U.S. diplomats in Beijing said it was not yet clear when they would arrive.

Friends heap praise on U.S. bombing suspect

DENVER (R) — A jury weighing a death sentence for convicted Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh heard him praised Monday as a cheerful youth, an excellent student and a model soldier who saved a man's life on the battlefield.

Defence attorneys trying to persuade the jury to spare Mr. McVeigh's life called a succession of former neighbours and army colleagues who gave glowing testimonials for Mr. McVeigh.

Captain Jesus Angel Rodriguez, Mr. McVeigh's commanding officer during the Gulf War, testified that Mr. McVeigh gave first aid to another soldier who was hit by shrapnel and "basically saved his life."

The jury of seven men and five women that found Mr. McVeigh guilty last week of blowing up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, killing 168 people in the worst mass murder in U.S. history, is weighing whether he should be sentenced to death or to life imprisonment.

The defence, which has called 21 witnesses in the penalty phase so far, resumes its case Tuesday. The case is expected to go to the jury later this week.

Capt. Rodriguez said that when he had to return to the United States because his brother-in-law had been killed in an accident, Mr. McVeigh was "really compassionate. He showed that he really cared," he said.

"Sergeant McVeigh was an

outstanding soldier. He did what he was told, anticipated what had to be done, (and) took pride in his work," Capt. Rodriguez said.

Mr. McVeigh, 29, expressionless through much of his trial, looked more lively Monday. He smiled often when his former friends and neighbours brought up memories, such as an anecdote by Capt. Rodriguez about his fondness for strawberry pop tarts.

Deborah Carballo, one of Mr. McVeigh's former teachers at a high school in Lockport, New York, said Mr. McVeigh was an excellent student with above average intelligence who never had any disciplinary problems. "I remember him as among the best students," she said.

Mr. McVeigh smiled and shook his head as if embarrassed when defence attorneys introduced his class yearbook, which said Mr. McVeigh had been voted "most talkative" by his classmates.

Lynn Drzyga, a former neighbour of the McVeigh family in Pendleton, New York, said Mr. McVeigh was about nine years old when he began playing with her children. "I just enjoyed having him around," she said.

Mr. McVeigh used to run around barefoot so Mrs. Drzyga made him wear a pair of socks when he came into her house to avoid dirtying the furniture. Years later, when Mr. McVeigh visited, he had a pair of socks on his shoulder. "That was special," she said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975
مجلس جيم بومرية عربية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
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Jordan Press Foundation,
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Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO
Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Peace vs tragedy

THE WORST measure that Israel can adopt at this critical stage in the stalled peace negotiations is to add fuel to the fire by attempting to impose an Israeli school curriculum on Palestinian children of east Jerusalem. True that the right-wing mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert, has backed down on introducing the measure for this year. But this is only one link in the chain of Israeli determination to create new facts in the Arab part of the City. Unless the Israelis desist from taking such unilateral acts as to pre-determine the future of Jerusalem before the outcome of the final status negotiations the problem will persist and grow to the detriment of all parties, including Israel itself. Take for example Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent decision to open new police stations in east Jerusalem. Was it not a clear provocation aimed at expanding the Israeli presence among the Arab population? New official departments have also been opened up in Arab areas for the same purpose. What does this indicate?

With the crisis over the construction of new housing units in Jabal Abu Ghneim not yet resolved, Israel should think of the repercussions of its own actions.

The Jabal Abu Ghneim controversy has proved to be a more formidable obstacle to the continuation of peace talks than ever thought by Israel. Therefore any exasperation of the situation over Jerusalem at this juncture would render the continuation of the quest for peace between the Arabs and the Israelis that much more removed from the realm of the possible.

One of the main features of the Egyptian initiative to remove the deadlock between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is to halt any measure or practice that aims to undermine or preempt the final status peace negotiations. Israel, which has been busy doing exactly the opposite, should make up its mind on whether it wants the Egyptians to succeed or fail in what is certain to be a last-ditch effort to save the peace process from imminent collapse and subsequently catastrophe.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily Tuesday criticised the government for awarding a JD 3.5 million contract to a foreign firm to supply cables to the Jordanian-Syrian power network linkage, preferring it over the Jordanian CABLECO company. Sultan Hattab said that CABLECO, which obtained the ISO 9002 certificate, has proved capable of implementing various projects and providing cables for many projects carried out in Jordan and abroad and it ought to have been awarded the tender for the job. The writer said that as a result of the government's decision to award the tender to a foreign company, CABLECO has decided to lay off 100 of its workers as it cannot finance the mounting expenses due to a reduced volume of work and few revenues. Laying off the workers means increasing the number of unemployed at a time when the government is seeking to find jobs for the Jordanian workers, he added. The writer questioned the reason behind denying CABLECO the tender, which would have averted the dismissal of workers, especially as this Jordanian company has proved it is capable to successfully serve tenders. If the government wants to attract investments and fight off unemployment, said the writer, it should not do it at the expense of local firms.

HAMADEH FARAANEH, a writer for Al Dustour, Tuesday expressed his view that with the rise of Ehud Barak as chairman of the Israeli Labour Party, the first step has been taken by the Israelis to bring down the Netanyahu government. Mr. Barak has been most adamant in refusing to join the Likud bloc in a coalition government, has proved to be one of the strongest opponents of Mr. Netanyahu's policies in Palestine and has often expressed determination to bring Labour back to rule. No doubt, said the writer, Mr. Barak will benefit from and try to exploit the errors and blunders of the Netanyahu government and will try, by all means, to bring down the present government through attracting the Shas Party to his side, said the writer. Furthermore, Mr. Barak, who enjoys popularity among the Israelis, is also expected to attract the half a million votes of Arab citizens of Israel in the coming elections and with their votes, Mr. Barak is bound to achieve his objectives. It is not that Mr. Barak supports the rights of the Palestinians, but he is favoured over Mr. Netanyahu because he is less harmful to the Palestinian cause and their aspirations, said the writer.

False hope in Northern Ireland, and Drumcree might decide

By Gwynne Dyer

FOR THE past two months the signs of hope for Northern Ireland have been coming thick and fast. But it is probably a false dawn.

First Tony Blair won the British election, and more or less promised the Irish Republican Army (IRA) that its political front, Sinn Fein, could rejoin talks on the British-ruled province's future as soon as it declared a new ceasefire.

Then Nelson Mandela flew senior Northern Irish politicians from both the Protestant and Catholic communities to South Africa for a meeting that was effectively a training session on how South Africans achieved a non-violent deal on their country's future.

The Unionist (Protestant) delegation would not meet, eat or sleep under the same roof as Sinn Fein, so it was in practice two separate conferences, but Mandela put a brave face on it. "What is significant," he said, "is that they are here. That alone is a sign that they are serious in searching for peace."

Now the Republic of Ireland has also elected a new government, and Prime Minister-elect Bertie Ahern believes that "the possibilities of moving forward are tremendous." As the traditional voice of pan-Irish Catholic nationalism, Ahern's Fianna Fail Party

has some sympathy for the IRA, and Ahern plans to meet Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams within the next week.

But all this hopeful talk is based on the fallacy that governments in London and Dublin (and even in the United States, where President Bill Clinton is issuing his usual optimistic forecasts), can somehow affect the course of events in Northern Ireland. They cannot. Northern Ireland is a place apart, with its own logic.

The most significant recent event in Northern Ireland was a murder. Unlike most of the 3,500 killings in Northern Ireland since the "troubles" began 30 years ago, this was no attack by Catholics on Protestants or vice versa. It was a sign that the province may actually be nearing the brink of what the locals call "Armageddon."

The victim was an off-duty policeman, a Protestant, like 93 per cent of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), who met a colleague for a drink in a pub frequented by fellow Protestants in the town of Ballymoney. An argument erupted about the police role in stopping Protestants from "marching" in the nearby Catholic village of Dunloy the previous week — and outside the pub Constable Gregory Taylor was kicked to death by a crowd of his own people.

They finished him off by stamping on his head. Protestants did not used to kill members of the RUC, which they saw as "their" police force, but many of them are now so frightened of the future that all the rules have changed. Northern Ireland went to the edge of civil war at the peak of the "marching season" last July. This July, it may cross that line.

The apparent immutability of the Northern Irish "problem" for over a quarter-century was based on the fact that two-thirds of the province's population were Protestant and would always vote to maintain the union with Britain. That fact is ceasing to be true, and the result is Protestant panic.

When London suspended local self-rule and sent in the troops in 1967 to curb the Protestant majority's oppression of and attacks on the Catholic minority, Protestants accepted this curbing of their power because they still felt fundamentally secure.

Then the IRA exploited the presence of British troops to whip up Catholic nationalism and resume its armed struggle for a united Ireland, and the province settled into the grim routine of a hundred or so terrorist-linked deaths a year. But "Armageddon" — all-out civil war — still seemed a long way off.

Now, at last, the higher

Catholic birth-rate is starting to tell. Catholics are no longer a third of the population, but 43 per cent.

Outside greater Belfast, they are an overall majority — and in the western half of the province, 75 per cent of the children are Catholics. This is already having electoral consequences.

In 1983, only two of Northern Ireland's 17 MPs in London were aligned with Sinn Fein. Today, five of 18 are. The Unionists have even lost control of Belfast city council. Hardline Protestants see their voting power draining away, and so they become more rigid, more defensive, more desperate. That's why the "marching season" has become such a flashpoint.

Protestants have traditionally held marches during the summer months, mostly under the banners of the Loyal Orange Order, to celebrate the Protestant victory in the siege of Londonderry in 1689. As streets and whole villages have shifted from Protestant to Catholic, the routes often take the marches through Catholic areas that are offended and frightened by them. But Protestants who secretly fear they are losing everything have a "not one inch" mentality.

In last July's high-profile confrontation at Drumcree, the RUC and the British first forbade the Protestants to march through certain

Catholic streets, and then suddenly gave in. The reason was this: the Protestant paramilitaries mounted heavy machine-guns on armoured bulldozers and told the police they would be sent in if the march did not proceed. The authorities replied that they would shoot, and dozens of Loyalists, police and British soldiers would be killed. The Loyalists said: So be it.

So the authorities caved in, because the alternative would have been a massacre that could have triggered civil war right across the province. Next month, when the Protestants plan to march through Drumcree again, that decision will have to be taken again — and it will be just as hard this time, because of Britain's old leverage over the Protestants is gone or much diminished.

A British pull-out, ethnic cleansing in mixed areas and repatriation of Northern Ireland on lines that create a defensible Protestant majority are no longer prospects that deter everybody in the Protestant paramilitaries. For many, they are an imagination, even palatable alternatives to the slow erosion that the future otherwise holds in store for Ulster Protestants.

Maybe, like South Africans, the Northern Irish will turn back at the edge of the abyss. But do not bet on it until after Drumcree.

Croatia needs more to improve human rights

ZAGREB (R) — Serb refugees are beaten after trying to return to the homes they fled during war in Croatia.

Two journalists are on trial for publishing disrespectful images of Croatian president Franjo Tudjman.

And television coverage of the president's reelection campaign is more reminiscent of communist propaganda than that of a democratic country's free media.

These are some of the things which have turned the spotlight on human rights and media freedom in Croatia — two issues that will be key factors in determining how soon the country is integrated into Western institutions.

Croatia elects a new president on Sunday — the man whose job will be to make or break its precarious ties with the West, under close scrutiny from Europe and the United States.

Diplomats say Croatia's human rights record has improved of late and Mr. Tudjman has begun to show signs of relaxing on key issues to meet the demands placed on him by the West.

"One has to look at Croatia and its human rights record like any other transition country and then you note two major violations — the treatment of Serbs and the media, (but) altogether it's not so bad," said a Western diplomat.

In 1996 the Council of Europe postponed Croatia's application for membership, citing among other things the stifling of the press and crimes committed in the rebel Serb Krajina region, which Zagreb recaptured in an offensive in 1995.

"There has been progress compared to 1995, but not without blemishes," one diplomat told Reuters.

He referred to the harassment and expulsion of elderly Serbs in central Croatia and U.N. reports of continued abuse of those who returned there after the war or stayed throughout.

A Croatian human rights worker said recent violent incidents underscored the lawlessness that rules in some villages. Led by the United States, the West has put unprecedented pressure on Croatia to improve its treatment of ethnic Serbs and meet other commitments it assumed under the Bosnian peace treaty in 1995 or find its road to international loans and Western institutions closed.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told Mr. Tudjman on a recent visit to Zagreb that it was his moral duty to end the violence. And last month ambassadors from several European countries and the United States visited Mr.

Tudjman en masse in a rare show of unity to protest against Zagreb's attitude towards Serb refugees returning home.

"The return of the Serbs is an important factor for determining the pace with which Croatia will integrate itself into (Western) institutions," one diplomat said.

"The government says it is not responsible for individual attacks by extremists and its policies support the coexistence of Serbs and Croats."

Up to 200,000 Serbs fled when the Croatian army retook the Krajina in 1995. Yet less than 10,000 have returned and many have found their houses destroyed or resettled by Croatian refugees who are unwilling to leave.

But what is resented most is a law allowing the temporary takeover of Serb property which observers say was aimed at discouraging them from coming back.

"Why else would the government let Bosnian Croat (refugees) settle in Serb houses?" the first diplomat said.

The Western message, hammered home vigorously by Ms. Albright during her visit, seems to have yielded quick results.

Days later Mr. Tudjman made a surprisingly conciliatory speech to local Serb leaders in eastern Slavonia, their last remaining enclave in Croatia,

and vowed to create conditions for all minorities to live in peace and build a better future.

His comments marked a reversal of attitude and were followed by another apparent example of compliance, when Croatia pressed charges against 12 people for evicting Serbs.

Diplomats believe that Mr. Tudjman, widely expected to win a second term of office, bowed to Ms. Albright's demands knowing that many Serbs would heed the violent message already sent and give up their houses in exchange for compensation.

One conceded that the Western diplomatic offensive overlooked some realities and was possibly a channel for venting frustrations over its impotence in neighbouring Bosnia.

"It's difficult to suppose the people who waged war can live together again. But the West is in a hurry, it wants quick results and forgets how difficult this project (of return) is."

The other issue which the West is adamant Croatia should address is the government's control of the media.

The attempts to silence Zagreb's Independent Radio 101 last November drew 100,000 protesters to the capital's main square and forced the government to revoke its decision and grant a frequency.

despite allegations of corruption in the ruling party and Mr. Tudjman's authoritarian style.

One Liberal Party leader told Reuters there was no point talking about his party's economic policies as it had no means in opposition of implementing them.

After 50 years of Communism, Croatia's democratic system is young and opposition politicians seem reluctant to accept that a strong opposition is vital for democratic government to work.

Small wonder then, that the public in its turn is reluctant to put its faith in them. Mr. Gotovac was tipped to be presented as a joint candidate to challenge Mr. Tudjman until Mr. Tomac broke ranks and forced his own candidacy despite opposition from his own and other parties.

A former dissident whose curriculum vitae for the campaign describes him as "poet, essayist, philosopher, orator and politician", Mr. Gotovac won the support of nine parties.

He is the best educated and most articulate of the three and says he stands for the universal principles of freedom, democracy, social justice and common decency — the qualities, he argues, Mr. Tudjman's regime lacks.

"Running at these elections is a gesture aimed to show against all the odds that there is another Croatia which resists the present ruling style... And that there are people who are displeased with it," he said.

But internal squabbling in his party, which is the natural home for Croatia's urban elite and is split over whether to cooperate with the HDZ in local politics, weakened him in the eyes of the conservative Croatian public. People still prefer controlling figures to those endowed with style.

Independent polls give 66-year-old Gotovac, who is perceived as too intellectual for the majority of rural voters, an approval rating of around 15 per cent.

Mr. Tomac, standing for the former Communists now called Social Democrats, is tipped to get slightly more because of the increasingly important role of former Communists in Croatia.

The moderately leftist party appears to be the main choice for those who oppose the ruling party and are disappointed by the flirting of big centrist parties, including the liberals, with Tudjman and the HDZ.

Mr. Tomac is a university professor who turned to politics in the late 1980s when Communism started falling apart. He credits himself for not leaving a sinking ship like many of his former colleagues who joined the HDZ out of opportunism.

The hugely popular station is now being denied the right to relocate its transmitter to enable it to broadcast more widely, on the pretext its licence was only for local transmission.

"State television meanwhile disregards all criticism and has been a mouthpiece for the government since independence."

"Our biggest concern is access to airwaves and broadcasting — this is where Croats get their news and restrictions seem so severe," one of the diplomats said.

"The government certainly controls the television and... It's true that through the criminal code it seems to be able to exert pressure on independent newspapers," he added.

In 1996 Croatia passed a law allowing the state to indict and try those thought to be slandering senior state officials.

Soon afterwards Novi List daily was fined for alleged tax fraud and the editor and lead writer of satirical weekly the Feral Tribune were taken to court for mocking Mr. Tudjman.

Both were acquitted but the trial was reopened in April this year, following repeated invective from Mr. Tudjman that the opposition and independent media are enemies of the state.

Imagine his dismay, then, when he was met by a lukewarm reception, that faded even more and turned to scarcely stifled yawns when the graduates discovered the substance of his address. Feeling that he had missed the point, and that drastic measures were needed to salvage the situation, he brought his speech to an end and invited his audience to ask him about whatever it was that interested them.

This was the stunner. Our eager speaker discovered that the rows of young men and women lined up before him had but one thought on their mind. There was only one piece of advice that they wished from him: To which country they should emigrate.

An older and a wiser man he woke the morrow morn.



For whom the school bell tolls

By Ali Kassay

AS SOME of the more astute readers may have noticed, I am rather fond of summer. In fact, I belong to that ilk that can hardly have enough warmth, and when it comes to singing the praises of this joyous season, I never tire of the act, though some of my interlocutors may. Still, there is so much that is beautiful about summer that one can go on for a long time (such as I appear to be doing) enumerating its virtues without repetition. Among the many attractions of summer, perhaps one of the most charming is that it is the season for school leaving ceremonies and university graduations.

By straining the increasingly unfocused mind, I can fling the memory back sufficiently to remember the days when I finished school, and later university. I can even remember the ambitions and high expectations which my contemporaries and I had. In those days far gone we did not have career guidance in schools, but we were all certain of what we would do. We were going to make a difference to our country and our society. We were going to change the world and make it a better place for heroes to live in. Of course, this was all in the good old days before the national economy had started making remarkable and sustained growth at all levels and by all standards, as official pronouncements frequently remind us, as a result of which we were forced to curtail our dreams to one that still seems overambitious to the level of naïveté, which is making ends meet.

Still, this is not the moment to dwell upon reality. I recall all this background simply to explain the thrilled state of mind in which a friend of mine found himself when he was invited to address a university graduating class on their career prospects. As if, by a time warp, he was flung back to the days of his own graduation. His hopes and high expectations were rejuvenated. It brought back all that was best and bravest in him.

Being from the private sector, he felt that he had a chance to gain the graduates' confidence. He was determined to respect this trust. He would address them candidly, but optimistically. He would speak about the brilliant future that awaits the graduates and the career prospects which are lined up before them. He would then conclude by exhorting them to fulfil their responsibility towards their community and country and to be good, persevering and law abiding citizens who would build a better future for themselves and their children.

Imagine his dismay, then, when he was met by a lukewarm reception, that faded even more and turned to scarcely stifled yawns when the graduates discovered the substance of his address. Feeling that he had missed the point, and that drastic measures were needed to salvage the situation, he brought his speech to an end and invited his audience to ask him about whatever it was that interested them.

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King says...

(Continued from page 1)

our armed forces and in every Jordanian soldier and recall the bright image which these forces have reflected about Jordan through their service with the U.N. peacekeeping forces around the world," the King added.

Referring to the ex-servicemen, the King said: "the retired officers who had offered distinguished service to the country deserve appreciation, and I was pleased and deeply satisfied to learn that the government was preparing

a draft amendment to the Jordan Economic and Social Organisation for Retired Servicemen (JESORS) law aiming to improve the retired soldiers' social, moral and material conditions and open before them further avenues to contribute to the development of the nation."

He said "I do bless the government's initiative in this respect and its work on the draft law, and I look forward to seeing it finalised and implemented as soon as possible."

In a reply message the prime minister said that the government will promptly

implement the Royal directives.

"The government will promptly embark on the introduction of an amendment to the JESORS law as soon as possible and undertake executive measures to ensure the implementation of the law which would promote this organisation's activities," said the prime minister.

He said that with this amendment, the nation will benefit from the expertise of the retired officers and their skills in the process of national building.

Lebanese minister...

(Continued from page 1)

with Israel." The Israeli delegate said the employee was attempting to repair an electrical line providing services to civilians while the Lebanese team held that the electrical control box was in a military zone closed to civilians, and used exclusively to provide power to a military position.

The committee used the same terms, at Israel's request, while discussing both incidents. When Beirut filed its complaint with the committee, it called the Israeli bombing a "violation" of the April 1996 ceasefire accord under which Israel and Hizbollah agreed to spare civilians and not to launch attacks from inhabited areas. In its statement, the committee did not use the

term "violation." "Israeli forces or those cooperating with them detonated roadside bombs in the area between Zillaya and Yohmor that resulted in the death of one person and the injury of another," the monitoring group said.

Mr. Bweiz expressed "hope that the committee is not influenced by the prevailing climate abroad."

The United States threatened Lebanon with retaliatory measures if it pushed for a U.N. resolution calling on Israel to pay damages for its shelling of a U.N. compound in Qana, Lebanon, a Lebanese official said Saturday.

The attack, which came during Israel's 17-day April 1996 Grapes of Wrath operation, killed 105 civilians.

Hosni Mubarak...

(Continued from page 1)

Syria's official Tishrin newspaper said Sunday that the plan being drawn up by the economy ministry would create "important facilities for free trade and interesting tax exemptions."

The common market, to group Syria, Egypt and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), will also be open to other Arab states. Tishrin

said. Syria's Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam called last week for an Arab economic conference to replace a regional forum scheduled for Qatar in November, so as to keep Israel out in the cold.

A ministerial meeting of the Damascus declaration, which groups Syria, Egypt and the GCC states, is due to be held in Damascus on June 28 and 29.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Monday that economic matters would be addressed at the meeting.

U.N. chief...

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Annan plans to send his undersecretary-general for political affairs, Sir Kieran Prendergast, to Israel to follow up on a U.N. General Assembly resolution which called for a halt in settlement construction.

But U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said Monday that the Israelis had sent a letter to Mr. Annan "seeking further clarification" about the mission which had still not received the green light from the Israeli government.

Israel has continued to pose conditions for such a visit which is aimed at confirming that work on the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement has stopped.

Mr. Annan is to report back to the U.N. General Assembly by June 25 under the resolution adopted in an emergency session on April 24. The Palestinians are warning they could reconvene the emergency session on the issue.

After fruitless talks between the Israelis and Palestinians in Cairo Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that his government had no intention of freezing construction of the settlement or others.

U.S. says...

(Continued from page 1)

Beirut with retaliation if it did not drop the resolution, saying he did not want "to betray the confidentiality of our diplomatic discussions."

"The U.S. called on Lebanon to freeze the project and made clear that any negative response would have repercussions on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon," a Lebanese official told AFP Saturday.

The shelling, which killed 105 Lebanese civilian refugees sheltering in the camp, occurred during Israel's 17-day Grapes of Wrath offensive in south Lebanon against the Iranian-backed Hizbollah.

A U.N. investigation said the Israeli bombardment of the Qana base was probably deliberate.

A total 107 states voted in favour of the resolution, while Israel and the United States voted against and three others abstained. The fifth committee — responsible for financing — normally takes its deci-

Palestinians order...

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Alyan's arrest, and police said he would be taken into custody if he left the autonomous Palestinian areas.

In a related development, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decided Tuesday to strip Mr. Alyan's superior, Col. Tawfik Tirawi, of his Israeli-issued VIP card which allowed him to enter Israeli without being checked at army roadblocks. Israeli news reports have named Col. Tirawi as the key figure behind the killings of the land dealers, a charge he has denied. Israel and the Palestinians are engaged in a fierce battle over land in the West Bank, Gaza strip and east Jerusalem — the areas where the Palestinians hope to establish an independent state. Palestinians fear that land sold to Israelis in those areas will forever be lost for a Palestinian state.

Rasheed starts...

(Continued from page 1)

was in the fifties."

According to the minister, the record of the Ministry of Interior (which is responsible for licensing, following up on organisational affairs, amending bylaws, and monitoring annual budgets and financial resources of political parties as is indicated in articles 13, 19, 21, 22, and 23 of the law) speaks for itself in supporting and encouraging organised political work in the Kingdom.

Based on the democratic process that was initiated by His Majesty and has become a way of life for Jordanians, Mr. Rasheed said, the ministry has not rejected the application of any political party, bringing to 28 the number of parties that have been licensed since 1992.

"We have since approved two major mergers," he said. "On Sept. 7, 1995, we

approved the merger of three political parties under the banner of the Jordanian Unionist Democratic Party. On May 6, 1997, the merger of nine other political parties under the title of the National Constitutional Party was also approved, thus reducing the number of parties from 28 to 18.

Furthermore, and in conformity with the constitution and the law, "we consider political parties as national institutions that contribute to the building and the development of the country. Even party employees are considered as public employees and their funds as public money," he said.

"While the ministry is willing and ready to provide all support for political parties, in accordance with the law and democratic principles, it stresses, based on these principles, the need for them to uphold all constitutional and legal provisions which we are all

keen on preserving for the sake of protecting our democracy," he added.

"Any violation of the law by any party is therefore an infringement on democracy."

"Article 19 of the Political Parties Law, in particular, stipulates that financial resources of parties must be Jordanian, local, known, and defined," the minister stated. The article allows donations and contributions but only if they were made by Jordanian citizens. The amount of these individual donations should not exceed JD 5,000 per year, according to the law.

Mr. Rasheed, who is also a member of the Senate, stressed that the best way to protect and strengthen democracy and pluralism is to make sure that the political parties abide by the 1992 law — whether in recruiting members, raising funds and maintaining their independence — and that the professional associa-

tions leave political work to the political parties themselves.

"If this is not done, we have to resort to the constitution which clearly stipulates that unless the establishment of such organisations has been allowed by the constitution, they cannot be set up and permitted to operate in the first place," he said.

Mr. Rasheed would not comment on recent press reports of irregularities found in the books and records of some political parties. He would only say that should violations be found, those concerned would be liable for prosecution.

"The courts will then decide the kind of punishment they will receive, including losing their licence," he said. "While we do not want to reach that point, I am hoping that the law will be observed by all groups in the Kingdom."

Crown Prince criticises...

(Continued from page 1)

the point of departure.

The Regent said Jordan will continue to move towards more democratisation and political openness with the well-being of citizens and the provision of decent and dignified lives for them topping its national priorities.

Responding to a question, Prince Hassan said that Jordan's policy has always been predicated on "inclusion of all and exclusion of none in society."

But he said this inclusion should go beyond parliamentary participation to the full mobilisation of civic society under the rule of law.

Prince Hassan stressed the centralism of Jordan's policies

which are in harmony with the centrist message of Islam but emphasised that when it comes to "radical and important issues like Jerusalem... we are radical (in demanding our rights)."

Prince Hassan urged more focus on anthropology, or politics for people, underlining the need to highlight shared values between followers of the three monotheistic religions.

Stating that bilateralism is becoming a relic of the past in a world that is becoming increasingly smaller, the Regent called for more cooperation among countries of the region in order to better serve the interest of the peoples of the area.

Bahrain forces...

(Continued from page 1)

"Security officials attempted to convince the people to leave quietly to maintain security and order. But when they failed to respond and continued their rioting and security violations, the security authorities took the necessary measures to disperse this gathering and restore calm and order in the area," the GNA report said.

"Some of the elements who instigated unrest and illegitimate gatherings were arrested."

Witnesses said Monday's protests were over the death of Abdul Zahra Ibrahim Abdullah, 27, who was arrested during anti-government protests in Sanabis on June 1.

A government official told Reuters Saturday that Mr. Abdullah was freed

on June 3 and his later death was from natural causes unrelated to his arrest.

The London-based Bahrain Freedom Movement said in a statement sent to an international news organisation that he died after being beaten by security forces.

"The protests were against the martyrdom of Mr. Abdullah," said a witness in Sanabis.

More than two dozen people have been killed in more than two years of anti-government protests in the Gulf Arab state. Hundreds of people have been arrested.

Members of the island's majority Shiite community have waged sporadic protests, bombings and arson attacks since December 1994 to press the Sunni-led government to implement reforms.

Islamists, have-nots threaten...

(Continued from page 2)

where a bloody Islamist insurgency is in its sixth year.

"Our generation is a threat to the system," said Rachid Bentahar, 30, who is not a fundamentalist. "It's a system built for the rich."

It is also a system finely tuned to keep power in the hands of the king.

Moroccans are being called to the polls four times in four months, starting with Friday's local elections and ending with a legislative ballot in September. Authorities promise that this time voting will be free and fair, unlike 1993 legislative elections that were fraught with irregularities.

In fact, all signs point to an opposition win in the legislative elections. And for the first time, a fundamentalist group, the Moderate Unification and Reform Movement, will be allowed to take part in elections even though it is banned.

But Mohammad Abouhar, the fundamentalist, says he will not vote.

"The king is the great sul-

tan," he said. "If a party wins, it must submit to the sultan. Our leader is the Koran," the Muslim holy book.

That is a risky statement in a country whose constitution declares the king "sacred" and whose citizens refer to the monarch in whispered tones simply as "the boss."

King Hassan has so far been able to use his impeccable religious credentials — he is a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed and bears the title Commander of the Faithful — to manage fundamentalists fearful of being perceived as bad Muslims. "Our goal is to get rid of this official Islam," said Fathallah Arsalan, spokesman for the banned Justice and Spirituality Movement, a more militant fundamentalist group that has strong support in some labour and professional unions and among the urban poor.

Both main fundamentalist movements seek improved social justice and a nation more firmly centred on its Islamic identity.

But "globalisation" is the buzz word of Morocco's leaders, and it starts with an accord for a free trade zone with the European Union by 2008.

To set the stage, Morocco is improving its human rights record, tackling drug trafficking and converting state companies to private ownership.

Thirteen years of economic restructuring have already squeezed the have-nots, and there is no sign a new era will make room for people like Bentahar. Unemployed since getting a law degree in 1992, he feeds his wife and 7-month-old son with odd jobs.

The National Association of Unemployed University Graduates, which has repeatedly staged sit-ins, says it has 20,000 members and claims there are hundreds of thousands like them. The official unemployment rate is 18.7 per cent, but some experts estimate one-third of educated young people in cities do not have jobs.

Many people doubt the elections will bring signifi-

cant change.

"You could give the opposition the position of prime minister, foreign minister, you name it, and that would mean nothing," said Henry Munson Jr., an American expert on Morocco who was an observer in the 1993 elections. Despite discontent, King Hassan remains Morocco's unifying force, making the question of his health a prime concern.

The 67-year-old monarch, who was hospitalised in New York with pneumonia in 1995, has shown no sign of shifting power to his son, Crown Prince Sidi Mohammed.

"There is a widespread sense the government is going to be vulnerable when he dies," Mr. Munson said from Washington, adding it is the fundamentalists who could best "exploit that vulnerability."

Will the king's health be an issue in the elections? "That's taboo," said Omar Zidi, head of the Moroccan Association of Human Rights. "The king is never sick."

Arafat met secretly with Iraqi diplomat — reports

(Continued from page 2)

autonomous Palestinian areas created under the Oslo peace accords with Israel.

"It may even be the first meeting since the first Oslo accords were signed" in 1993 he said.

"As far as Arafat is concerned, he sees that Iraq has started to sell oil and has returned to the world arena," Mr. Baram said, referring to a recent easing of the U.N. embargo imposed on Baghdad following the 1991 Gulf war. "Mr. Arafat has never

wanted to rely on another Arab player, not even Egypt. He has long believed that his independence derives from the manoeuvring space between forces in the Arab World available to him," he said.

The reported meeting between Mr. Arafat and the Iraqi official came during a visit by the Palestinian leader to Amman for talks with King Hussein.

The King has been one of the most outspoken supporters of lifting the sanctions against Iraq.

Israel warns Syria against any attack

(Continued from page 2)

intermittent peace talks without solving their dispute over the fate of the Golan Heights.

Syria wants back the strategic plateau Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war in exchange for peace. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu opposes withdrawal from the area.

The arch-rivals have not held talks in over a year.

Tension between the two countries soared last September when Syria moved thousands of its


troops in Lebanon to within striking range of the Golan. Damascus said then the realignment was defensive.

Mr. Biran also called on the international community to prevent Iran from obtaining long-range missiles which could reach Israel.

"This must be prevented and I think the nations of the world that desire a proper path, should also pledge themselves to preventing this," Mr. Biran told the radio.

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ROYAL JORDANIAN

Reflecting the Change

Jordan doubles exports to Qatar

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's exports to Qatar almost doubled last year compared with 1995 figures while the Gulf emirate exports dropped slightly, a report by the Amman Chamber of Commerce indicated Tuesday.

The report, released after a meeting between Sheikh Abdullah Ben Ahmad Al Thani, the chairman of Qatar's Chamber of Trade and Industry and Yana Boustami, the acting head of the Amman Chamber of Commerce, showed that the Kingdom's exports to Qatar reached JD17.9 million in 1996 compared with JD9.9 million in the previous year.

The report said that most of Jordan's exports were sheep, dairy products, fruits and vegetables, cement, medicine, textile and leather, cosmetic products and foodstuffs.

The figures showed that Qatar has exported JD6.2 million worth of goods in 1996 compared with JD6.4 million in the previous year. The exports were mostly chemical products, polyethylene and organic compounds.

According to the report, the balance of trade between the two countries was JD11.6 million in favour of Jordan in 1996 compared with JD4.5 million in the previous year.

World Bank chief backs Lebanon's Hariri in debt dispute

BEIRUT (R) — World Bank President James Wolfensohn threw his support behind Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri in a public debate over Lebanon's ballooning public debt, saying he would act just like Mr. Hariri if he were running the country.

Mr. Wolfensohn said that even though he was concerned about the high level of Lebanon's debt he trusted the "financial good sense" of Mr. Hariri's government.

His remarks at a news conference in Beirut followed an outspoken call last week by Francois Bassil, president of the Lebanese Banks Association, for Mr. Hariri to curb the debt and lower interest rates to get the economy moving.

Jordan's volume of trade with the Gulf emirate did not plunge dramatically following the 1991 crisis as was the case with other Gulf Cooperation Council states.

In 1991, Jordan's exports to Qatar totalled JD10.4 million while in 1992 it declined to JD8.3 million before rising to JD9.9 million in 1993.

During the talks held Tuesday at the Chamber of Commerce and attended also by Tourism Minister Aqel Bataji, the two sides explored ways to intensify joint ventures where the Qatari businessmen can invest in Jordan.

The visit comes in line with the improvement of ties with the Gulf emirate following a visit last month by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali to Doha where he called upon Qatari executives to come to Jordan and do business with their Jordanian counterparts.

Among the projects that Jordan is encouraging Qatar to launch is a gas pipeline from Qatar to the Kingdom's southern port of Aqaba where it will find its way to Jordanian markets.

The Gulf emirate is expected to host the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) summit in November. Several European, American, Asian and Middle East countries, including Israel, are expected to attend.

Palestinian workers suffer from Israeli closures, ILO says

GENEVA (R) — Israel's closure of the occupied Arab territories and construction of new Jewish settlements produced greater economic and social hardship among Palestinians last year, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has said.

The United Nations agency, in a report by its Director General Michel Hansenne, also said there was "no evidence" that stringent closures had been effective in preventing guerrilla activity.

With employment prospects for workers in the occupied territories "very dim," the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) must create a large number of permanent jobs "if the risk of serious social and political upheaval is to be averted," the ILO said.

"The employment and income...of workers of the occupied territories has steadily deteriorated since the signing of the Oslo agreements in 1993," it said.

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Labour, there have been 392 working days of total closure between 1993 and 1996, including 99 last year.

The intensification of closures last year was compounded by a rapid rise in the number of new settlements and the massive roadworks programme underway to interconnect them with Israel and occupied Jerusalem through bypass roads, according to the ILO report.

"In the short-term the obvious priority should be to establish the conditions for the normal operation of a labour market, in particular the removal of hindrances to the movement of people and goods within and among the territories and across borders," the 35-page report added.

The annual "Report on the Situation of Workers of the Occupied Arab Territories" was issued to the ILO's 174 member states, holding their interna-

tional labour conference until June 19. Israel's delegation was expected to respond in debate.

This year's guest of honour will be His Majesty King Hussein, who is also expected to back the report in his June 13 speech.

The report is based on an ILO mission to Israel and the occupied Arab territories from Feb. 21-March 5, the 20th such investigation since 1978.

Regarding the 99 closure days throughout the territories in 1996, "39 comprised a total siege of the cities of the West Bank," according to the statistics of the PNA.

Partial closures, during which workers were permitted to travel to Israel, were effected for 28 days, it added.

"As a consequence of the inability to go to their jobs, a fair number of Palestinian workers had corresponding portions of their wages withheld by Israeli employers," ILO said.

"Although the justification for these measures has always been to combat terrorism following acts of violence committed by Palestinians, closure of this type has been enforced even as a preventive security measure and there is no evidence of the effectiveness of such stringent measures against terrorism," the report added.

"There is, on the other hand, ample evidence of the economic and social hardship it causes among the Palestinians," it pointed out.

Closures also affected education and training.

"Settlement expansion more often than not presupposes the confiscation of Arab-owned land, often comprising olive groves and pasture, thus having the added negative economic effect of weakening the means of livelihood available to Palestinians," ILO emphasised.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7189	0.8103	1.4413	112.59	1.3672	1688.10	1.9316	5.8110
DE Mark	0.5824	1.0000	0.3552	0.8394	65.56	0.8077	984.47	1.1249	3.3836
GB Sterling	1.2515	2.6155	1.0000	2.3619	184.45	2.2729	2782.17	3.1849	9.5207
CH Franc	0.6939	1.1905	0.4229	1.0000	78.09	0.9618	1177.36	1.3395	4.0276
JP Yen	0.0089	1.5237	0.5414	1.2796	1.0000	1.2311	15.07	17.144	5.1544
CA Dollar	0.7209	1.3411	0.5851	1.0849	1510.35	1.0000	117.37	1.3412	3.9058
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0108	0.3581	0.8494	1510.35	0.8167	1.0000	1.3412	3.9058
NL Guilder	0.5177	0.8836	0.3157	0.7463	58.25	0.7180	878.89	1.0000	3.0058
FR Franc	0.1721	0.2955	0.1050	0.2484	19.36	0.2384	33.25	33.2500	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7080	3.7500	0.3770	3.6398	0.3020	3.6726	1538.00	3.3850
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	1.0000	5.2966	0.5325	5.1410	0.4266	5.1876	2169.49	4.7811
GB Sterling	0.2667	0.1888	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.8005	0.98	409.60	0.9027
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8780	9.9472	1.0000	9.65	0.8011	9.74	4074.38	8.9790
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0303	1.0303	1.0000	0.8630	1.01	422.00	0.9300
Kuwait Dinar	3.3113	2.3444	12.4172	1.2483	12.05	1.0000	12.16	5068.09	0.9300
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0210	1.0208	0.9910	0.8822	1.0000	418.21	0.9216
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4609	2.4414	0.2454	2.3697	0.1966	2.3911	1.0000	2.2038
Egyptian	0.2954	0.2092	1.1078	0.1114	1.0753	0.0892	1.0850	453.77	1.0000

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	17.50	17.45
W. Texas	18.95	18.80
Bonny	17.50	17.45
Dubai	17.25	17.03
UL Gas	190.00	190.00

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4581	0.16276	0.38462	30.0454
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.4677	0.16618	0.3827	30.6767
KW Dinar	3.3113	5.68828	2.02102	4.77555	373.134
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.55581	1.61891	3.82558	298.884
CY Pound	1.9452	3.3396	1.1864	2.8041	218.949

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	343.5	344
Silver (oz's)	4.78	4.8
Platinum (oz's)	440.5	445.5
AL (3 Months)	1608	1609
CU (3 Months)	2508.5	2509.5
Zinc (3 Months)	1382	1383
Lead (3 Months)	641	642
Ni (3 Months)	7290	7310

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)					
Period	1-3	3-6	6-9	9-12	1-12
Currency	Month	Months	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.57	5.69	5.78	5.96	6.06
GBP	6.38	6.50	6.75	6.75	6.88
JPY	0.45	0.46	0.68	0.75	0.93
DEM	2.87	2.94	3.06	3.05	3.12
FRF	3.27	3.38	3.47	3.51	3.54
CHF	1.24	1.38	1.31	1.37	1.40
ITL	6.93	6.92	6.88	6.75	6.77

Main Equity Indices					
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High
New York	DOW JONES	7563.05	84.55	1.13	7572.3
New York	S&P 500	869.02	6.11	0.71	870.05
London	FT-SE 100	4737.4	50.7	1.08	4737.4
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	20532.55	308.73	1.53	20582.2
Paris	CAC 40	2664.18	-22.02	-0.82	2679.85
Frankfurt	DAX	3665.01	-2.42	-0.07	3670.63

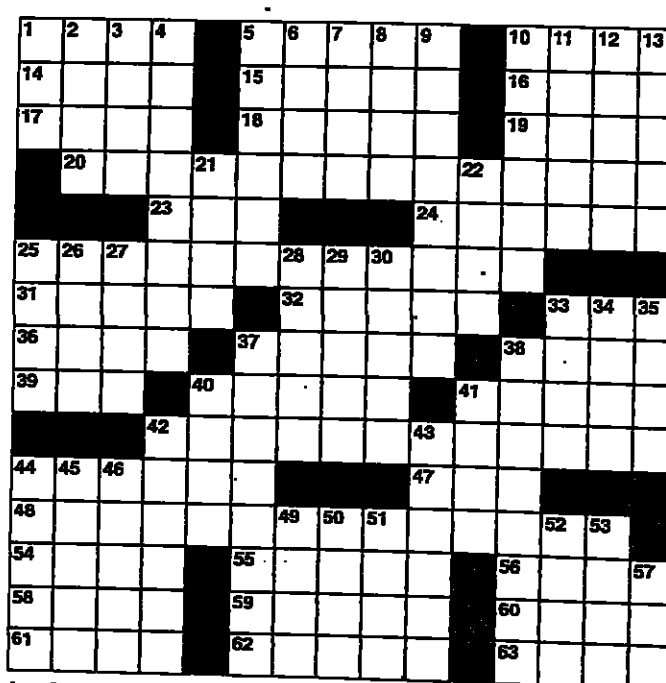
Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	243.58	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1448	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	332	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	150.5	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	22.98	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	150	Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	480	Spot

JOD Cross Rates			
Currency	Buy	Sell	Self
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	0.709
GB Sterling	1.1538	1.1596	1.1567
DE Mark	0.4107	0.4128	0.4117
CH Franc	0.4898	0.4922	0.4910
FR Franc	0.1217	0.1223	0.1220
JP Yen	0.627	0.6301	0.6285
NL Guilder	0.3652	0.367	0.3661
IT Lira	0.4165	0.4186	0.4175

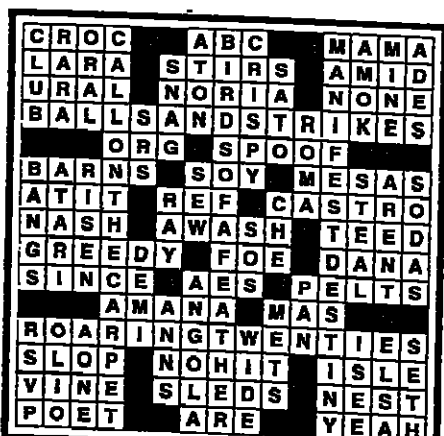
* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- Tortoise rival
 - Bell (Bronte pen name)
 - Fashion
 - Veneration receiver
 - Olympian Nurmi
 - Algerian port
 - Rotatable disk
 - Gift
 - Poker holding
 - 1717 league
 - Chum
 - Revised
 - "Eight Bells" painter
 - Use
 - Judicial wear
 - Shipping initials
 - Treasures
 - Witch gathering
 - Osaka Bay city
 - Native: suff.
 - Incus and stapes
 - Powerful financier
 - Steadfast
 - Affront
 - Work unit
 - Unfair principle
 - Malevolent
 - Damp
 - Squad or act start
 - Surfeit
 - Gorda
 - Responsibility
 - Knowledge
 - Fall behind
 - Beast



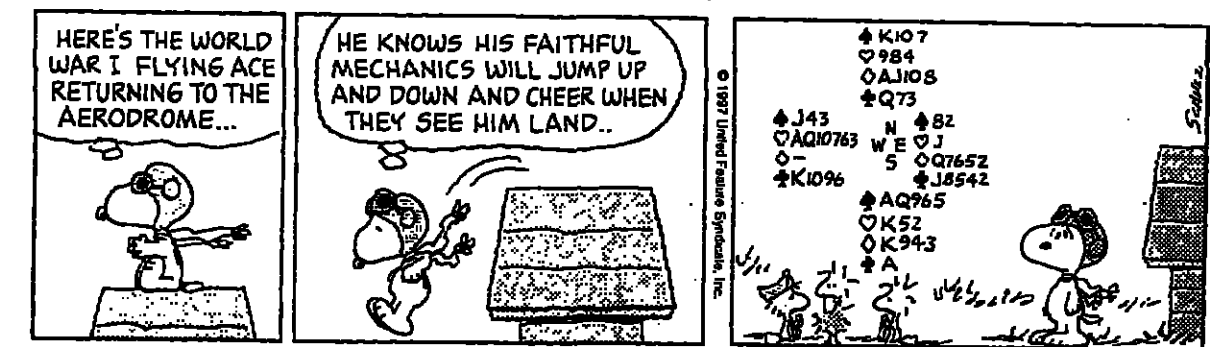
by Anthony R. Mupo



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- DOWN
- Secreted
 - Door to one
 - Crowd noise
 - Grammatical omission
 - Handsome one
 - Bistro
 - Dzung, India
 - Racetrack
 - Aristocrats
 - Delicate fabric
 - Praying figure; in art
 - Ball, e.g.
 - Finished
 - Gloomy cover
 - Roman date
 - Salary
 - Carrier partner
 - Appoint
 - Treat unfairly
 - Wretched abode
 - Corpulent
 - River crossing
 - Woodwind
 - Buckle
 - Scorn
 - Kind of court
 - Account
 - Fowl or owl
 - Rent to another
 - Intellectual
 - That is, to Caesar
 - Celestial dazzer
 - Behoves
 - Tart
 - Actress Louise
 - Italian province
 - Toll
 - Sullen
 - Mao-tung

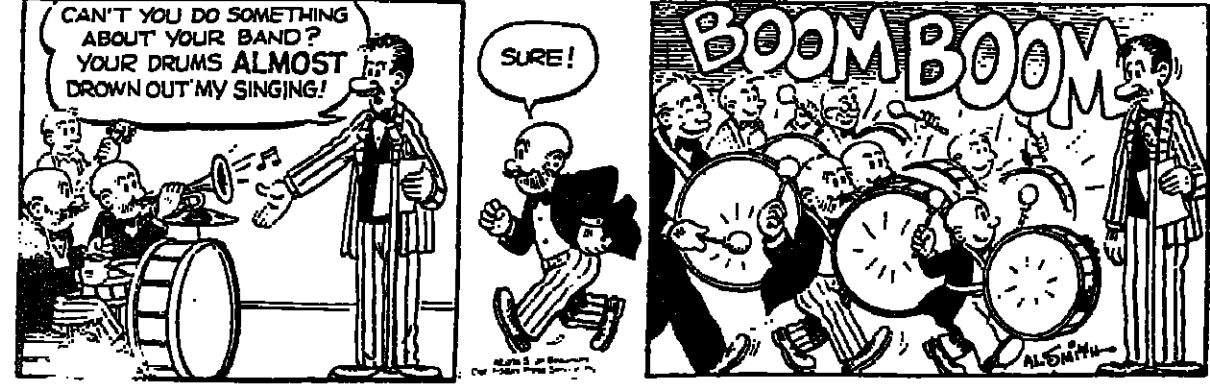
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You will be faced today with a situation where you must decide between several new projects, however, don't base your decision solely on intuition. Later this evening will be a good time to seek knowledgeable people.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) A trip you have been planning needs to be arranged more precisely today if you are to avoid a costly setback. You should not neglect pressing property matters which have been put aside and must be dealt with.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A dynamic fellow associate has some fine ideas to offer today, so listen carefully to this person. Take it easy later this evening, and get plenty of rest for the days ahead could be quite stressful if you are not prepared.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) It is very important that you stop procrastinating concerning some important obligation and get it completed as a sign of thoroughness to a superior. A longtime friend can help with this, so don't be so reserved.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you have been somewhat concerned today about a health matter, this is a good time to make the necessary appointments with professionals. Later this evening will be good for spending quality time with your mate.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Routine chores may seem somewhat boring today, however, handle them quickly so you will have the time for more important matters. Later this evening is good for discussing with a bigwig your ideas for success with business activities.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get busy answering letters and paying bills which have been piling up for some time. Meet with a friend you want as a fellow business associate and iron out the details for a plan of action which will bring success.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Focus your attention on financial and property matters today, and improve them considerably. Take it easy later this evening, and get to bed early so that you are prepared to handle any difficult business matters.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Try to add to your present progress today, and use more efficient methods than in previous days. If you go out socially later this evening, stick with close friends who will be looking out for your best interests.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Be certain to keep any promises you have made to your mate today, or a big disagreement could ensue. Be more affectionate with him or her and show the attention which is desired thereby to maintain harmony.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Even if it is a bit difficult to handle today, do a favour for a friend who is in a tight spot. You will be repaid in spades for your effort. Later this evening will be good for spending time with close friends.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A superior has been keeping an eye on your career activities today, so be sure to put your best foot forward. You should not allow anyone to disrupt your schedule, since you could have many obligations to finish.

Birthstone of June: Pearl — Moon Stone

UAE fights uphill battle to restore balance in workforce

DUBAI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is fighting an uphill battle to persuade locals to take on jobs in the private sector and loosen the dominance of Asians in the workforce.

A recruitment agency has opened for Emiratis for the first time, although most locals are put off by the relatively low pay and long working hours of the private sector.

"Our aim is to help Emiratis get a better understanding of the needs and constraints of the private sector," said the director of Target Management Services, Alaa Awayes.

"The demand for work from locals is on the rise while the public sector, which recruits most (UAE) nationals, is saturated," he said.

Mr. Awayes told AFP that his agency has received 500 applications from Emiratis job-hunters since it was launched two months ago, along with 1,200 from nationals of other Arab countries.

Official figures show that some 15,000 Emiratis are looking for a job, but the private sector prefers to rely on the skilled but lower paid expatriate workforce.

Thanks to its oil wealth, the UAE gross national product per capita ranked among the highest in the world at \$18,200 in 1996.

Emiratis benefit from a cradle-to-the-grave welfare system, which provides free education, medical care, plots of land and even finance for weddings to discourage local men from taking foreign brides.

The number of Emiratis in the insurance and banking sector is no higher than 12 per cent, out of a workforce of 12,000, according to official estimates.

"The low salaries in the private sector, lack of social security, and working hours which are incompatible with our customs are hardly an incentive for nationals," said Emirati journalist Kefaya Al Sharaf.

But a steep rise in the number of university graduates and the growing presence of women on the job market has spurred the authorities to step up their campaign.

The government has repeatedly warned against the expansion of the Asian workforce, mostly from the Indian subcontinent.

Foreigners already account for between 70 and

80 per cent of the 2.3 million population, according to unofficial estimates, and academics calculate that the share of nationals has been falling each year.

In 1996, the UAE expelled more than 170,000 foreigners whose papers were not in order and has toughened legislation on immigration.

Over the last two years, the government has adopted a string of measures to encourage locals to take over various sectors of the economy.

But businessman Mahmoud Karallah said that "Emiratis do not want to

Exposition highlights Jordanian women activities in services, production of goods

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In a bid to introduce the achievements of Jordanian women in both the production of goods and services sectors, the Business and Professional Women Club (BPWC) is holding a one-day exposition Wednesday.

The exposition, which will be held today at the King Hussein Sports City, aims to acquaint the industrial and business community with the various economic sectors where women are active.

"A number of regional and international organisations which provide economic help for women will be taking part in the exposition," she added. "It is a good opportunity to have a comprehensive idea about what Jordanian women can produce."

Ms. Barghouti stressed that the exposition will launch the Business Incubator, a service which will help women establish their own small and medium-size enterprises.

The BPWC built 11 cubical offices which have access to technical and business support service in one integrated package.

"The incubator assists in reducing initial costs and operating expenses as well as providing access to a strong service to help overcome management shortcomings," she said.

The club's Small Business Counselling Centre, will provide the women with systematic training on accounting, marketing and pricing as well as circumstances provide women with information concerning access to funds and credit facilities.

World Bank approves \$8.8m in loans to West Bank

WASHINGTON (R) — The World Bank Monday approved two credit facilities totalling \$8.8 million to help the Palestinian (National) Authority (PNA) improve its judicial system and attract Palestinian expatriates to advise the government.

The bank said the first loan, of \$5.5 million, would help the PNA put in place a legal framework to increase the efficiency of the judicial process and to encourage private-sector investment.

The project will involve drafting a unified set of modern business laws and improvement of court administration, as well as the training of judges, prosecutors and court personnel.

"By equipping the judiciary with the requisite know-how and suitable facilities to handle modern business transactions, the project aims to help remove a serious obstacle to foreign investment," the bank said in a statement.

The second loan, totalling \$3.3 million, would be used to attract Palestinian professionals abroad to help manage departments in government ministries and agencies or to serve in senior technical positions, the bank said.

About 150 Palestinian professionals were expected to be recruited under the project, which would finance their relocation allowances.

Both loans will be drawn from the trust fund for Gaza and West Bank, each with a 40-year maturity, including a 10-year grace period before repayment starts.

Financial markets had come round to the view that the single currency is likely to be launched and had taken a stance on which countries are likely to qualify next year for the launch, the BIS said.

"The convergence of bond yields in Europe is consistent with a similar convergence of inflation and fiscal prospects," the BIS said in its annual report.

BIS economists said that they had measured investor sentiment by yields on interest rate swap contracts on derivative markets.

Regarding the authorities, the BIS said: "It is all the more important that European countries pursue firm macroeconomic and structural policies so as to avoid doubts about their eventual participation that might cause domestic interest rates to rise and undermine their fiscal position."

BIS signals potential of euro currency

BASEL, Switzerland (AFP) — The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) this week highlighted the role of the future euro single currency as a force in the world economy and as a reserve currency.

International reserves held in European currencies are far too low compared with the potential importance of the euro zone in terms of output and world trade, it said.

The international role of the euro would depend in part on how it was used as an anchor currency by countries outside the Group of Ten (G-10), the report said.

In Russia, development of trade with Europe might eventually drive financiers to favour the euro.

Recent forward prices for the dollar signalled that the currency might give up some of its recent gains in favour of the euro.

Financial markets had come round to the view that the single currency is likely to be launched and had taken a stance on which countries are likely to qualify next year for the launch, the BIS said.

Malaysia proposes M.E., Asia-Pacific forum

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Acting Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has proposed establishing of a forum between Middle East and Asia-Pacific nations to discuss mutual interests.

"Considering the importance of the Middle East as our supplier of energy and considering our historical links, it is surprising that ties between our two regions have not been stronger," Mr. Anwar said at the opening of a two-day Asia Oil and Gas Conference.

"Perhaps the time has come to set up a forum to address issues of mutual interest, starting with oil and gas," he told more than 100 delegates from about 25 nations at the conference organised by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute.

Mr. Anwar did not indicate whether the forum should be at government or business level, or both.

Reasons for such a forum include the "increasingly competitive global environment," which is making the Middle East nations need new and larger markets for their products.

"As the world's engine of economic growth, the Asia-Pacific region is ready and willing," he said.

"Oil companies, particularly national oil companies from the regions, would be in the position to lead the way."

The oil industry is conservative and dominated by a few giant companies, but there is

A new 'global' British Airways unveiled

CAIRO (J.T.) — More than 200 people gathered on the river bank, the Nile Maxim, Tuesday to witness the unveiling of the revolutionary new British Airways.

The event, billed as the "world's biggest business broadcast," allowed British Airways to reveal its new identity to guests and employees in 63 countries across all five continents simultaneously.

The identity unveiled was as spectacular as the global event. As part of the identity features, paintings of Egyptian artist, Chant Avedissian who will appear on tails of British Airways aircraft, four large Faloukas sailed from Maadi down the Nile to the Nile Maxim, displaying Chant's motifs of their large sails. At the heart of the new corporate identity is the creation of more than 50 world images which will appear on aircraft, ground vehicles, stationery, signage, timetables, ticket wallets — everything that bears the British Airways name.

Painted tent panels from Egypt, a wood carving from the Pacific Northwest, Delft from Holland, paper cut art from Poland, ceramic from Germany and a painting based on the elaborate beadwork of South Africa are among the 15 images that will be adapted for use in the first phase of the three year implementation plan. Additional images will be added each year with Moroccan, Tunisian, Saudi and Jordanian images scheduled for 1998.

The global images will be married with a brighter and lighter corporate of red, white and blue, drawn from the British union flag, reflecting the airline's British heritage.

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Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

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UGLIE
GLACEY
GURDED

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: A (Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: HUMAN CROAK FEMALE SECEDE
Answer: A moody artist can do this - MAKE A SCENE



Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo (L) kicks towards French soccer legend Michel Platini (R) as a wall of youths wear T-shirts that indicate 365 days until the opening of France 98 World Cup Soccer. France currently hosts a soccer tournament which confronts England, France, Brazil, and Italy in friendly matches (Reuters photo)

Inter Milan considers legal action over Ronaldo

MILAN (AFP) — Inter Milan President Massimo Moratti warned Barcelona on Tuesday that he could use the civil courts to force them to release Brazilian striking ace Ronaldo from his contract.

Inter struck a deal with Ronaldo's agents last week, agreeing to pay a reported \$26 million fee stipulated in a buy-out clause in his contract with the Catalan club.

Barcelona, however, have since claimed that the buy-out clause was only valid for moves within Spain, and could not be extended to other countries.

This would enable Barcelona to either keep the 20-year-old goal-scoring phenomenon — or negotiate an even higher price for him from Inter.

Moratti, though, said it was unlikely he would be meeting with Barcelona President Josep Nunez in the near future.

"I'm willing to meet and talk with anyone," he said. "But if the aim of the meeting was to ask for more money there would be no point. A year ago, Barcelona paid 30 billion lira for him — now he costs 45 billion."

"I'd say that's something to be happy about."

Inter's lawyers are currently poring over the details of Ronaldo's contract in their bid to prove that the buy-out clause is a general one and not confined to Spain.

After earlier seeming to rule out any civil action against Barcelona, Moratti told the Gazzetta Dello Sport: "In life, you can never say 'never'."

"We don't want things to come to that, it's not something we would want to do voluntarily. To begin, we would examine the possibilities with the (Italian Football) Federation, then we'd have to see."

Moratti is already facing the prospect that he may not land Ronaldo after all.

"We've got strikers, and if in the end Ronaldo didn't come we would go into the market for another," he said.

But the Italian oil baron added: "Ronaldo mustn't let himself get distracted by all this. He should just stay calm and if his wish is to come to Inter, then he'll come."

Croatia hails Majoli's 'first tango in Paris'

ZAGREB (R) — Croatia's press hailed their new sporting hero Iva Majoli on Monday after her triumph in the French Open on Saturday made her the first Croatian winner of a grand slam singles title.

"Iva's victory at Roland Garros was the most beautiful tango in Paris. It was the first tango she danced at grand slam tournaments but it will not be the last," the daily Vjesnik said.

All the dailies splashed pictures of an exuberant Majoli, clad in a flower-patterned dress after upsetting World No.1 Martina Hingis, holding the heavy winner's cup that she so surprisingly captured.

Immediately after her victory Croatian television showed several minutes of film replaying the best moments of the match, with shots of her jubilant mother and friends and close-ups of her unbelieving smile after Hingis netted the last ball of the match.

"After Iva Majoli's triumph at Roland Garros on Saturday nothing will ever be the same for Croatian tennis. Because that Saturday of June 7 Iva Majoli and Croatian tennis were inscribed in sport history books," Vjesnik reported from Paris.

Papers reported that President Franjo Tudjman had sent congratulations to Majoli for her "majestic victory", on behalf of all the Croatian public and personally.

The only press criticism was of senior officials from the Croatian Tennis Association and the Croatian Olympic Committee — none of whom turned up at the airport to welcome the new champion home.

"The queen of Paris deserves a better welcome," said Slobodna Dalmacija.

Majoli, however, has expressed no disappointment that upon her arrival she was welcomed only by members of her family, friends and some journalists.

"At 19 I feel stronger both mentally and physically. I feel just great," she said.

Major Leagues' best Orioles crush White Sox

CHICAGO (R) — The Baltimore Orioles crushed the Chicago White Sox 10-2 on Monday to improve their record to 40-17 - the best in the Major Leagues.

Mike Mussina tossed a five-hitter for his third win over Chicago this season and Jeffrey Hammonds capped a four-run fifth with a two-run homer.

Mussina (8-1) gave up just two runs — both solo homers — walked one and struck out six to win his eighth straight decision. In three wins over the White Sox this season, he has allowed four runs and 15 hits over 24 innings with two walks and 19 strikeouts.

"I just focus on what I'm supposed to do, I don't do anything different against the Sox," Mussina said.

"He's (Mussina) been one of the better pitchers in the league for a long time," Chicago manager Terry Bevington said. "It's not a surprise to see him do well."

Hammonds is 11-for-21 (.523) with two homers and five RBI during a seven-game hitting streak.

The Orioles learned prior to the game that right fielder Eric Davis will undergo abdominal surgery Friday and will be sidelined for eight weeks.

"Hammonds continues to come around ... With the loss of Eric, we're really going to need him," Baltimore manager Davey Johnson said.

Mike Bordick had three hits and three RBI. B.J. Surhoff went 4-for-5 with three runs and an RBI and Brady Anderson added three hits for Baltimore, which improved the Majors' best record to 40-17.

Chicago did all its damage against Mussina in the seventh. Albert Belle hit his

14th home run and Lyle Mouton connected for his third of the season one out later.

In the night's only other American League game, the surging Anaheim Angels won 12-5 in Kansas City.

Darin Erstad homered and had a career-high four RBI and Allen Watson pitched five-plus innings to win his fourth straight start in the rout of the Royals.

Watson (5-3) allowed just one run over the first five innings until running into trouble in the sixth, allowing the Royals to score three runs to rally from a 7-2 deficit.

Watson was replaced by Rich Delucia, who held the Royals at Bay before Anaheim scored five times in the ninth, including Erstad's sixth home run of the year.

Kansas City starter Glendon Rusch (3-4) was tagged for seven runs and

Jones leads National League pitchers

CINCINNATI (R) — Bobby Jones became the National League's first 11-game winner and earned his eighth straight victory on Monday as the New York Mets defeated the Cincinnati Reds 4-2.

Jones (11-2), who allowed two runs and seven hits over eight innings, struck out four and did not walk a batter as he improved to 7-1 on the road.

With his eighth straight victory, Jones tied a team record set by Tom Seaver in 1969 and equaled by David Cone in 1988.

During his streak, Jones has gone at least seven innings in each start and has not given up more than three runs. In his last five outings, he has pitched 40 innings and has surrendered just seven runs.

Cincinnati starter Kent Mercker, who was denied his third straight win, allowed two runs and five hits over seven innings. He walked four and struck out three as the Reds remained the only Major-League team without a complete game.

In Los Angeles, Todd Zeile hit a pair of two-run homers and Ramon Martinez allowed two earned runs over seven innings, leading the Los Angeles Dodgers to an 8-3 victory over the Houston Astros.

Zeile had the first multi-homer game by a Dodger this season and seventh of his career.

Martinez (6-3) gave up nine hits, walked two and tied a season high with nine strikeouts as he improved to 11-3 lifetime against the Astros, defeating them for the second time this season.

Chris Holt (6-5) was reached for seven runs and six hits in 6-2/3 innings as Houston lost for the sixth time in its last nine road games.

In Montreal, Henry Rodriguez's three-run triple highlighted a four-run first inning and Jeff Juden won his first game in nearly three weeks as the Montreal Expos completed a four-game sweep with a 6-5 victory over the Chicago Cubs.

Montreal has won all six meetings with the Cubs at Olympic stadium and completed its first four-game sweep of Chicago since September 11th-13th, 1979.

Juden (6-2) allowed a pair of runs and five hits over six innings, walking four and striking out six. The win was his first since May 24.

St. Louis Cardinals pitcher Andy Benes allowed just one run over eight innings to beat his former team in a 9-1 victory over the Padres in San Diego.

Benes (5-2), who spent his first seven seasons with the Padres, won his third straight decision, giving up four hits with two walks and seven strikeouts. In his last four starts, Benes has limited the opposition to four runs and 21 hits, walking 10 and striking out 36 for a 1.24 era.

The San Francisco Giants' Barry Bonds homered and drove in four runs and Keith Folke allowed one run over 6-1/3 innings to pick up his first Major-League win as the home team won 7-4 against the Florida Marlins.

Bonds had an RBI single in the first and hit a three-run home run into the upper deck in right field off Florida starter Pat Rapp in the fifth. Bonds has three homers in his last two games to increase his total

to 11.

In a rain-delayed game in Denver, Vinny Castilla's three-run home run snapped a fifth inning tie and helped the Colorado Rockies to an 8-3 victory over the Atlanta Braves.

Atlanta took a 2-0 lead in a second inning that was interrupted by rain for two hours and 25 minutes.

Colorado took the lead in the fifth. Tom Glavine (6-4) walked his counterpart, Roger Bailey, and plunked Eric Young. Bailey scored and Young moved to third on a double by Ellis Burks.

Young scored the tying run on Larry Walker's ground-out. After Andres Galarraga struck out and Dante Bichette walked, Castilla belted his 16th home run of the season and the 100th of his career.

The Rockies tacked on another run in the sixth and two more in the seventh to seal their sixth win in 10 games.

Record participation for Nagano Olympics

LAUSANNE (AFP) — Guinea-Bissau, Iran, the Virgin Islands and Ghana are among a record 79 nations entered for next year's winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan, the International Olympic Committee announced Tuesday.

The 79 countries all met the June 7 deadline for accreditation, although competitors nominated by national Olympic committees will still have to meet qualification standards set by the IOC in agreement

with international winter sports federations.

The last winter Olympics, in Lillehammer, Norway, in 1994, attracted a total of 1,737 competitors from 67 countries.

The presence of 12 new federations and the addition to the programme of women's ice hockey, curling and snowboarding is expected to bring the number of competitors to close to 2,500 in Nagano.

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TRUMP COUP TOMMY AT WORK

Neither vulnerable. East deals.

NORTH
♠ 5
♥ K9874
♦ 1032
♣ J732

EAST
♠ 6
♥ 6
♦ AKJ7654
♣ Q984

SOUTH
♠ AK10792
♥ A102
♦ 8
♣ A6

The bidding:
NORTH SOUTH WEST NORTH
40 40 101 101
Pass Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Queen of ♣

It looked as if 1986 was going to be a bumper bridge year for Trump Coup Tommy. Tommy, a klutz in everyday situations, seemed to be a dummy when normal play would deliver the contract and declarer on those hands where trumps broke badly. Then he became a star.

East's opening preempt was a little on the conservative side — we would have chosen a full-blooded five diamonds. Tommy felt that four spades was an underbid but, try as

he might, he could not find a reasonable alternative. West thought that Christmas had come a month early.

West led the queen of diamonds and continued the suit, declarer ruffing. Warned by the double that trumps were not going to break, Tommy cashed just one top spade, then played the ace of hearts, dropping the jack from East.

Applying the Principle of Restricted Choice, declarer ran the ten of hearts, cashed the ace and king of clubs, then repeated the heart finesse. A club was discarded on the king of hearts, and Tommy had won eight of the nine tricks played.

With both West and South down to nothing but four trumps, declarer, who needed just two more tricks, led a card from the table and ruffed low in hand. West overruffed and returned the queen of spades, but Tommy knew exactly what to do — he allowed the lady to hold the trick. West was now forced to lead into declarer's A 10 tenace, giving Tommy the fulfilling trick.

Without the double, the contract would surely have been defeated. West simply drew a blueprint of the distribution for declarer, tantamount to committing suicide with Tommy at the helm.

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Jordanian skydiving record set in Aqaba

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — While a Jordanian skydiving record was set this week, participants in the first international skydiving championship failed to break the Parachuting Over 40 Society's (P.O.P.S.) record during their week-long competition in Aqaba.

With competitors from 13 countries taking part, bad weather and lack of facilities hindered the attempt to break the world record according to Vice President of the Royal Jordanian Parachute Club (RJPC) Samih Janakat.

Janakat said that more than 180 participants took part in several competitions like Hit and Rock, Accuracy, Scramble and among other parachuting contests.

He told the Jordan Times that participants failed to break the P.O.P.S. 96 skydivers record but managed to achieve the number through diving in three groups.

Janakat added that during the contest, the first Jordanian group parachuting record was recorded with 26 skydivers forming a circular jump attempt. Participants from other countries took part in achieving this record, he said.

Janakat said that it was not possible to attempt to break the world record because of lack of participants, facilities and "heavy training."

He said three Jordanian parachuters won the third, sixth and eighth places among the first ten winners in the accuracy competition and another Jordanian won the tenth place in the Hit and Rock contest.

The championship is the first-of-its-kind sporting event in the Arab World, and was organised by RJPC in cooperation with P.O.P.S. bringing together 300 civilian skydivers.

Participants performed display jumps

and single free falls, group scramble parachuting and group parachuting, Janakat added.

Skydivers had to perform individual jumps after which they were required to hit a target with a diameter of 15 centimetres, explained Janakat, adding that each participant had five jumps.

Teams consisting of five jumpers performed scramble parachuting with a different formation in each jump.

In another unique competition, jumpers who had never jumped together before, were required to perform a group jump while changing the formation every two seconds.

The RJPC was established in 1996 for performing para gliding, parachuting, skydiving, and simulated jumping among other air sports.

Janakat, a former army officer, said parachuting sport lacks popularity in Jordan because this sport was only limited to army skydivers and no civilians was allowed to take part or participate in this sport.

He said that RJPC will start in August enlisting fans of the sport, which needs high expenses, long training and facilities such as planes and equipment.

He added that people are not able to watch this sport without cameras and monitors "which will cover and transmit what is happening above 12,000-feet enabling them to feel the enjoyment of this sport."

Janakat said that his club seeking sponsorship from local firms and companies to encourage and finance the sport in the Kingdom.

He said the club will hold para gliding, hang gliding, summer camps free fall simulators, ballooning and other sports for those who are willing to learn skydiving.

Lift-off for the Tim and Pete show

LONDON (AFP) — World No. 1 Pete Sampras and Britain's Tim Henman successfully launched their doubles partnership at Queen's Club here on Monday, beating Macedonia's Aleksandar Kitinov and Portugal's Nuno Marques 6-3, 6-4 in their first round clash.

Sampras, now preparing hard for Wimbledon after a disappointing French Open campaign, suggested the link-up with Henman as both players need match practice following fitness problems.

Sampras suffered a thigh strain at last month's World Team Cup in Germany and then went down with a stomach bug at the French Open, where he crashed out in the third round to Sweden's Magnus Norman.

Henman, a first round loser at Roland Garros, was meanwhile playing his first competitive match on grass since elbow surgery.

The two have often practised together, and decided the doubles sessions would boost them both as they tune up for Wimbledon, although they will not enter the doubles event there.

Jordan not staying with Bulls without Phil Jackson

SALT LAKE CITY (R) — Michael Jordan is optimistic that the core of the defending champion Chicago Bulls will be kept together next season.

Changes will be made, he acknowledged before practice for Wednesday's game 5 of the NBA finals, but "I'm not looking negatively at that. I'm looking positively."

"Somehow things are going to work out and this team's going to be back together."

However, Jordan himself has insisted he will not be back — \$30 million-plus contract offer or not — unless coach Phil Jackson is rehired.

Jackson — sometimes at odds with club bosses Jerry Krause and Jerry Reinsdorf — has not even said what

he will do if they make him a serious offer.

In an era of rocketing coaching contracts, he has received several attractive offers although a couple of the coaching vacancies have since been filled. He also might simply want to take some time off.

Also, the perennial Scottie Pippen trade rumours are swirling again, and Dennis Rodman may have worn out his welcome with his bizarre behaviour and poor production in these finals.

But Jordan said: "I'm looking at it from the standpoint that Phil's going to be coaching this team next year, I'm going to be back next year, Scottie's going to be back next year, Dennis is going to be back next year, and

we want to win."

With the finals tied at two games apiece and down to a three-game series, some Chicago players may feel they have to make big contributions and win a title to keep their jobs.

"We know they're going to make some changes in the off-season so this may be the last time this team could be together," Jordan said.

He specifically mentioned that 43-year-old backup centre Robert Parish might retire after 21 years in the National Basketball Association and that late-season bargain pickup Brian Williams, another backup centre, probably would not be back.

"Other guys may not be here for whatever reason," Jordan added.

Rodman takes a holiday from NBA finals

SALT LAKE CITY (AFP)

— Dennis Rodman returned from a lightning trip to Las Vegas on Monday, apparently still blaming the state of Utah for his troubles on the basketball court.

Rodman, whose multiple hair colours and myriad tattoos — not to mention his penchant for cross-dressing and self-promotion — have made him the oddman of the National Basketball Association, said he just needed to kick back after the defending champion Bulls fell 78-73 to the Utah Jazz in Game Four of the NBA finals on Sunday night.

"I went out and had a good time and was relaxing," the flamboyant Bulls forward said. "I got rid of this bad taste in my mouth."

Utah fans could be forgiven for thinking that Rodman himself was responsible for the bad taste.

After a dismal performance in Chicago's Game-Three defeat in Salt Lake City on Friday, Rodman tried to whip up his competitive spirit by insulting members of the Mormon Church, who make up 70 per cent of the state's population.

On Sunday the 36-year-old NBA rebounding champion again contributed little, pulling down just six

rebounds in 25 minutes.

He also left the court briefly in the first half pleading a stomach ailment, which coincidentally flared up just after Rodman received a dressing-down from Bulls coach Phil Jackson.

Rodman also incurred his first technical foul of the finals — his record 17th of the 1997 playoffs — when he grabbed Utah forward Karl Malone's foot as Malone tried to jump over the prone Rodman.

At least one of his teammates thought the expedition to Vegas was uncalled for.

"We don't have any control over what Dennis does off the court," an exasperated Scottie Pippen said. "What he does after the game is his preference. You would think that he would want to start to evaluate what's going on on the court within himself."

Jackson admitted he did not know Rodman was planning such an ambitious field trip. Las Vegas is about 375 miles (600 km) away from Salt Lake City.

"I thought maybe he was going to the state line," Jackson said. "He made it beyond that."

Jackson offered a rather wan hope that the trip would give Rodman a boost. Throughout the playoffs Rodman is shooting 38.2 per cent and averaging



Chicago Bulls forward Dennis Rodman beams a smile as he leaves a session with the press at Salt Lake City's Delta Centre. Rodman received a technical foul in last night's game against the Utah Jazz. The Bulls have suffered two straight losses in Salt Lake City, allowing the Jazz to tie the best-of-seven NBA Finals series at two games each (Reuters photo)

just 6.4 rebounds. Rodman claims he isn't sure why he hasn't been pulling his weight in the finals. He complained Monday that he hadn't been given enough playing time to guard NBA most valuable player Malone successfully.

"I feel if I have some time to play against Karl and be consistent, I can play him," Rodman said. "I can't play 24 minutes and be effective. I've got to play 35 or 40 minutes and I'm not doing that."

Rodman acknowledged that his low rebounding numbers and non-existent scoring might account for his lack of minutes. In the meantime, Michael Jordan said Rodman should forget about trying to unsettle Malone mentally, a favourite Rodman tactic, and just do the work on court.

"He's not going to let you get into his head," Jordan said. "I think Dennis has to realise that. If you're going to play Karl Malone, you've got to play him well, use the physical skills you have and the energy

Spain's Sainz wins Acropolis Rally

ATHENS (AFP) — Spain's Carlos Sainz, driving a Ford Escort WRC, won the Acropolis Rally, the eighth round in the World Championship, here Tuesday.

He surged late to beat overnight leader and four-time world champion Juha Kankkunen of Finland, in another Ford Escort, by 17 seconds.

Sainz, also a former world champion, overturned a 17-second deficit to lead the Finn, who had won the Acropolis Rally twice before, by seven seconds on the penultimate special stage.

The amazing turnaround put an end to Kankkunen's hopes of recording his first World Championship win since the 1994 Portuguese Rally.

Reigning world champion Tommi Makinen of Finland finished third in



Finnish driver Juha Kankkunen drives his Ford Escort WRC during the Zemenos special stage on the third and final leg of the 44th Acropolis rally June 10 (Reuters photo)

a Mitsubishi Lancer, despite having suspension and steering problems, in front of British driver Raymond Burns.

Burns, a teammate of Makinen's, was penalised three minutes

at the final time trial stage which allowed Makinen, winner of last month's Argentine Rally, some vital extra points that kept him four points ahead of another Briton Colin McRae in the overall standings.

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Contractors who possess experience in the same field, and are qualified financially and technically, and who wish to participate in the above tenders for one or more of above mentioned projects, are invited to submit their prequalification documents, not later than 12:00 hrs of 13/7/1997 at the company's Head Office, noting that contractors who wish to participate in all of above projects must be at least qualified for "Upgrading of Amman LPG Filling Station Project, while contractors who wish to participate in any one or both of the other two projects must be qualified for any of them."

Prequalification documents should include the following:

1. Financial capability of the contractor (financial references to be provided).
2. Technical capability of the contractor, including details of experience and background of personnel, specifications of available equipment... etc.
3. Detailed documents showing similar projects executed by the contractor, full names and addresses of firms for whom such services were rendered, and details of projects including contract cost and completion periods.

Results of prequalification shall be announced and advised to participants as soon as they become available.

Eligible contractors may obtain tender documents from the company's Head Office at the First Circle, Jabel Amman, against non-refundable JD(200) per set for each project, not later than 12:00 hrs of 22/7/97.

Offers must be submitted at the company's Head Office not later than 12:00 hrs of 16/9/97.

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9TH CONSECUTIVE DAY CALLING FOR JUSTICE: A Palestinian land owner and an Israeli officer confront each other, on Tuesday, after the Palestinian tried to cross onto land confiscated by the Israeli army to build a road for the Moraj settlement in Rafah City, Gaza Strip. The protesters are demonstrating for the return of their land for the ninth day running (Photo by AFP)

Turkish army, government divided on Kurd rebel fight

ANKARA (R) — Turkish government officials hit back Monday at army accusations that they were not doing enough — financially or diplomatically — to back the military fight against armed Kurdish separatists.

The public row on two fronts pointed to a deepening rift between the ascendant military and civilian authorities.

The foreign ministry rejected army charges that it had been slow to rebuke Turkey's neighbours for allegedly sponsoring Kurdish guerrillas. And the finance minister tried to brush aside armed forces complaints about underfunding for the anti-rebel fight.

"Turkey has been very vigilant in warning those countries as well as in preventative measures," Foreign Ministry spokesman Omer Akbel told a news conference.

The army last week slammed the ministry for its failure to stop Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) fighters getting hold of Russian-made SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles abroad.

It was a rare display of disunity against the guerrillas and the army's first open attack on Turkey's diplomats, previously untouched by mudslinging between the secularist generals and Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist-led government.

Spokesman Mr. Akbel said Turkey was in constant touch with foreign governments and international bodies to stop support for the PKK, fighting for Kurdish self-rule in south-east Turkey.

A leading general said Friday the rebels had knocked out two Turkish helicopters with SA-7 missiles in a cross-border mission in northern Iraq since mid-May. Thirteen soldiers, including two senior officers, were killed.

He said the top brass had warned diplomats five times since 1992 that the rebels were trying to get the missiles from Iran, Syria, Armenia, Greece and Cyprus.

The foreign ministry is headed by conservative Tansu Ciller who has attracted secularist wrath for forming a coalition last year with Erbakan's Islamists. Army pressure has forced the government to urge early polls to prevent its collapse.

Finance Minister Abdullahi Sener, a member of the Islam-based Welfare Party, denied any problem over paying for the month-long campaign in northern Iraq, where the rebels have mountain bases in Iraqi Kurdish territory.

"There is no such thing as a funding crisis," Mr. Sener told reporters in Istanbul. The army accused the government last week of holding back

funds for the northern Iraq push.

Mr. Sener said there had been a misunderstanding over when to pay unforeseen military expenditures over and above the 450-trillion lira (\$3.2 billion) budgeted for them this year.

He said he had written to the generals Monday to tell them his ministry could dip into its emergency funds or push a supplementary budget through parliament if the armed forces found themselves short later in the year.

More than 24,000 people have died in almost 13 years of fighting between the PKK and Turkish forces. Analysts say the rebels' acquisition of anti-aircraft rockets could seriously hinder government forces.

"I'm sure it would be bad news (for Turkey). A lot of what they do is done in the air in support of what's happening on the ground or what's going to happen on the ground," a Western diplomat said.

Turkey relies heavily on U.S.-made Cobra and Sikorsky helicopters and Franco-German cougar choppers in its anti-insurgency. The army says the rebels now have up to 60 SA-7 systems that can take out helicopters.

King assassin refused liver transplant tests

NASHVILLE (R) — A judge has turned down a request by James Earl Ray, convicted assassin of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Junior, for tests that could lead to a life-saving liver transplant.

Mr. Ray's lawyer said the ruling was tantamount to a death sentence for the 69-year-old convict, who is dying of liver disease and seeking a trial to prove he was not the killer.

The lawyer, William Pepper, also suggested Monday's decision was part of a continuing cover-up of a conspiracy in the 1968 assassination. He said he would seek a reversal within 10 days in the Tennessee Court of Civil Appeals.

Mr. Ray has been near death several times in recent months with terminal liver disease. State officials have said the state does not finance extraordinary medical procedures, such as organ transplants, for prisoners.

Chancery Court Judge Irwin Kilcrease ruled the state's

Corrections Department did not have authority under Tennessee law to allow Mr. Ray to travel to another state for a medical evaluation.

Mr. Pepper said the University of Pittsburgh Hospital's transplant centre was prepared to accept Mr. Ray for an evaluation to determine if his age and condition would warrant such surgery, should an organ become available. He said the evaluation and surgery, if they happened, would be financed by private funds which he planned to raise.

One of King's sons, Dexter, had urged the court in a letter to allow Mr. Ray to have the evaluation. The King family has also backed a trial for Mr. Ray, to dispel conspiracy theories that have dogged the tragedy ever since gunshots felled King on the balcony of a Memphis motel 29 years ago.

"Why are they afraid to let this man live? What is it they fear? Why do they have to

react in lock step this way when there's nothing the state of Tennessee can lose?" Mr. Pepper asked in court.

Without a transplant, Mr. Pepper said, Mr. Ray will continue to suffer a "lingering death." He quoted Mr. Ray's doctor as saying Mr. Ray could not survive much longer without a transplant.

Mr. Ray confessed to killing King but later denied it and was serving a 99-year sentence.

Tests were conducted last month on the rifle Mr. Ray allegedly used, in his bid to win a trial to prove that someone else was the assassin. The test results were due to be released in a Memphis court on June 18 but both Mr. Pepper and Mr. Ray's brother Jerry told reporters that had been delayed.

Mr. Ray's lawyers contend that the rifle found was not the real weapon and that someone else killed King — perhaps a shadowy figure Mr. Ray has identified as "Raoul."

U.S. reportedly unhappy over Israeli import of Iranian pistachios

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The United States has complained to Israel over its choice to import Iranian pistachios rather than American pistachios, Israeli public radio reported Tuesday.

Israel is the world's top consumer of pistachios and the United States is apparently frustrated in its attempt to break into the market with California-grown nuts, the radio reported, citing Israeli sources.

Ignoring its normally strong support for the U.S. policy of isolating Tehran's Islamist regime politically and economically, Israel purchases Iranian pistachios via Europe.

The green nuts have an infamous role in the history of Israel-U.S.-Iranian relations.

In the 1980's "Iran-contra" scandal, aircraft carrying secret U.S. arms shipments to Iran transited via Israel, and rather than fly out of Iran empty, the planes were loaded with pistachios for the Israeli market.

Funds from the arms sales and pistachio trading permitted the government of President Ronald Reagan to covertly finance the Contra guerrilla war against the left-wing government in Nicaragua in violation of a congressional ban on such aid.

Israeli involvement in the affair was motivated by a desire to prolong the war between Iran and Iraq, both declared enemies of the Jewish state.

Israel court to rule on Netanyahu on Sunday

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's high court will rule on Sunday on requests by opposition legislators that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu be indicted for fraud and breach of trust, a court spokesman said on Tuesday.

The court heard arguments in a 13-hour session last month and said at the time it would issue its rulings at a later date in connection with a corruption scandal that threatened to bring down Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government.

The court will issue its rulings on seven petitions dealing with two questions: should the prime minister and justice minister be indicted and should it intervene in (Mr. Netanyahu's) decision not to suspend the

justice minister," said spokesman Moshe Goral.

Police had recommended that both Mr. Netanyahu and Justice Minister Tzachi Hanegbi be charged with fraud and breach of trust in the short-lived appointment of lawyer Roni Bar-On as attorney-general in January.

But state prosecutors said there was sufficient evidence to indict only one figure in the affair, key coalition legislator Aryeh Deri of the religious Shas party, prompting charges of racism by Shas' mainly blue-collar Sephardi constituency.

Israel's channel one television had alleged Mr. Bar-On's appointment was part of a deal to win a plea bargain for Mr. Deri in his three-year corruption trial. Mr. Deri has denied it.

Mr. Bar-On, who quit 12 hours after taking office amid a public outcry that he was unqualified for the job, was cleared by prosecutors.

At last month's hearing, the five-judge panel threw out several related petitions including a request to order a state investigation into the allegations and one to make public a 995-page police report on the affair.

"The bottom line is I didn't commit any crime and the attorney-general confirmed that," Mr. Netanyahu said after prosecutors decided he should not stand trial.

He apologised for any mistakes in the Bar-On appointment, but accused the media and opposition of trying to use the affair "to overthrow the government."

Three ministers to be questioned on links to Russian crime figure

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli police plan to question three ministers and five members of parliament about their suspected links to an alleged boss of the Russian underworld, police said Tuesday.

Police officials told Israel Radio that some of the officials, belonging to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Bloc, the

allied Israel B'aliya Party of recent immigrants and the opposition Labour Party, would be questioned under caution, meaning they are criminal suspects. The politicians under investigation were not identified.

The probe centres on their links to reputed Russian crime boss Zvi Ben Ari, 47, who has been held by Israeli police since May 12 on suspicion of defrauding Russian banks of \$85 million and involvement in the

murder or attempted murder of Russian bankers and anti-crime campaigners.

Ben Ari, also known as Grigori Lerner, is also suspected of immigrating to Israel under a false identity and of trying to fraudulently set up a bank in the country.

He has refused to cooperate with Israeli investigators or to meet with a Russian prosecutor sent to the country to question him.

Israeli Television reported Monday night that police suspect Ben Ari of trying to "take over" or gain influence in the Likud, Labour or Israel B'aliya parties via contributions to the movements or related groups.

Police said Tuesday that their investigation could eventually involve interrogation of a dozen leading public figures.

The investigation

widened following the arrest late last week of a Likud militant, Zeev Uhrbach, on suspicion he received thousands of dollars from Ben Ari to help him get a foothold in the party.

Recent Israeli press reports said Ben Ari also gave some \$100,000 to two associations of recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union run by Israel B'aliya leader Natan Shtrasky, who is currently under investigation for industry and trade minister.

Israel has taken in more than 700,000 emigrants from the former Soviet Union since 1989 and organised crime figures have profited from the influx to build a wide-ranging network active in prostitution, money laundering, drug trafficking and illegal gambling, police say.

Swiss hire 2 U.S. public relations firms in damage control exercise

BERN (AFP) — Switzerland has hired two public relations firms in the United States for a combined \$50,000 a month in an attempt to restore its image, blackened by rows over Nazi gold and Jewish assets, foreign minister Flavio Cotti said Tuesday.

He told parliament he had been reticent about signing a contract with the two companies, but the Swiss government recognised it had to adopt U.S. methods to repair its reputation in America. New York-based Ruder Finn will handle media relations, and Washington's Barbour,

Griffith and Rogers would work mainly with Congress, government spokeswoman Marie-Marceline Krumann said.

Trial contracts were inked in mid-April. Ruder Finn is being paid \$30,000 a month until the end of the year and the lobbying firm 20,000 a month for a year starting mid-May.

Switzerland has been vilified by the American media and Congress for profiteering from its financial dealings with Nazi Germany.

A U.S. report issued last month said Bern acted as a banker for the Nazis and that the Swiss National

Bank had bought gold stolen from concentration camp victims.

Swiss banks have been heavily criticised for failing to pay back assets belonging to Jews fleeing Hitler's persecution. The public relations companies will explain the measures that Switzerland has already taken to get back into the world's good graces, such as creation of a fund to aid Holocaust victims.

They will also explain that Switzerland was surrounded by axis powers and was threatened with invasion, said Mr. Krumann.

More than 700 killed in Sudan fighting

KHARTOUM (AP) — A pro-government militia claims to have thwarted a rebel offensive on a southwestern state after prolonged battles that left more than 700 fighters dead.

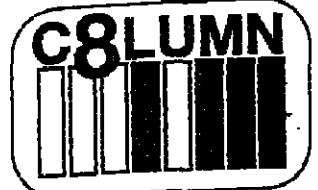
Government soldiers and allied forces killed 611 rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) of John Garang when they tried to capture territory in Bahr Al Ghazal state, militia Commander Kerbino Kuaymin Bol said Sunday. He said 132 regular soldiers and members of his group and another allied faction were killed in the fighting that erupted late last month. No other details of the fighting were available.

Mr. Bol said the allied forces are now in full control of Bahr Al Ghazal.

There was no word from Colonel Garang's SPLA on Mr. Bol's claims, which could not be independently verified, but there have been several reports in recent weeks of heavy fighting in the area.

Mr. Bol, a former rebel leader, signed a peace treaty with the government along with three other rebel groups in April. The pact is aimed at ending Sudan's 14-year civil war, which killed some 1.3 million people in the fighting or related famines.

Col. Garang, whose SPLA is the main rebel group in the south, did not sign the treaty and continues to fight for more autonomy for the mostly Animist and Christian south from the Islamic and Arabised north of the country.



Jagger's wife expecting a baby at age 41-U.K. papers

LONDON (R) — Rock superstar Mick Jagger's wife Jerry Hall is expecting a baby just a few months after the couple were reconciled. British newspapers said. The Daily Mirror quoted doctors as saying Hall, who will be 41 next month, was nearly three months pregnant.

Jagger's spokesman said he "had no information" about the reports. Jagger and Hall, who already have three children aged between four and 13, separated late last year and Hall threatened to divorce the 53-year-old Rolling Stones singer because of his highly publicised infidelities. Jagger returned to the family home last October, pledging to be faithful to his Texas-born wife. Hall said at the time that she longed for another baby. "Being a mum is the greatest thing I have ever done," she said in an interview. The couple met in 1977 when Jagger was married to Bianca and Hall was involved with rock star Bryan Ferry. They married in Bali in 1990.

Italian women have sex younger, and with fewer results

ROME (AFP) — Italian women are having sex younger now than 20 years ago, but are producing fewer children, according to an official national fertility study published Monday. On average, Italian women lose their virginity at 19 1/2, compared to 21 1/2 in the 1970s, and give birth to 1.3 children, compared to two a generation ago. The survey of 6,000 women aged between 20 and 49 years found that, today, contraception is used for six years before marriage, while the fifty-something post-war generation mainly used contraception for the two years after tying the knot. It also revealed that regardless whether the women were born just after the war or in the 1970s, they still want, on average, two children. The reality is that for the post-war generation, that is exactly what they got. But for today's generation, that number has slipped to 1.3. Just one in ten 20-year-old Italian women today has a child.

Pakistan holds Nigerian with heroin in tennis balls

KARACHI (R) — Pakistani customs authorities arrested a Nigerian man at Karachi airport for carrying 6.25 kg of heroin concealed in tennis balls, a customs statement said. It said the Nigerian, named Innocent Nwaosu, was arrested before he could board a Pakistan International Airlines flight for Nairobi. "His baggage consisting of a consignment of sports goods was subjected to thorough examination, which yielded the recovery of 6.25 kg of heroin powder concealed in 145 tennis balls," the statement said.

Sierra Leone thieves steal investiture regalia

FREETOWN (R) — Gunmen have broken into the offices of Sierra Leone's chief justice and stolen the regalia used for swearing in new heads of state. The regalia could be wanted soon if Major Johnny Paul Koroma, who seized power in a coup last month, is to take an oath of office as president. But it was not clear on Monday whether the thieves were opponents aiming to prevent Koroma's investiture or supporters hoping to hold a ceremony without Chief Justice Samuel Beccles Davies.